Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

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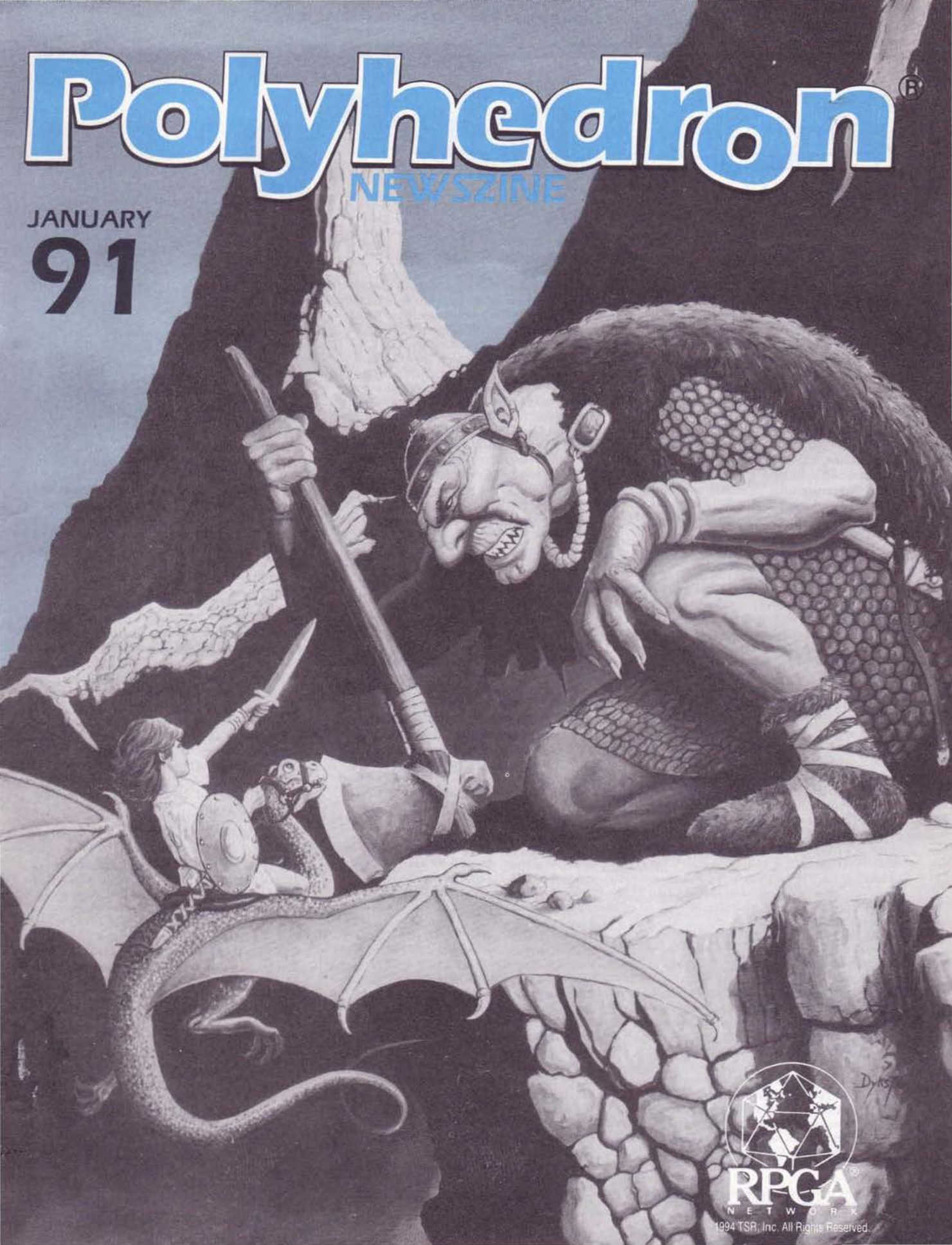

RPGA® NETWORK

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Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

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About the Cover

Terry Dykstra's daring young dragon rider faces dire negotiations or an uneven fight with his giant adversary.

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Notes From HQ

"Words, words, words."

Though now I'm editing rather than teaching, I'm still in the words business. That's a good thing, since I love words. Oh, I'm no linguistic prodigy, and though I've had a few years of study, I'm still surprised and delighted by words every day. Probably the most wonderful thing about them is the simplest: they are the way we most often communicate. I'm writing words now; two months later you are reading them. Oddly, it's *right now* both when I'm writing and when you're reading; and it's *right now* both when you write an article and when all the RPGA® Network members read it in the Newszine. Written words are timeless and enduring, so we should be even more careful about the words we write than the words we speak.

Being in the words business, I've had a lot of time to think about what I like and dislike in the way of written words. For instance, a few years ago, when I was especially picky and proper (many would use less complimentary terms, and I sympathize with them now), that phrase up there would have driven me to distraction: "a lot." "A lot" is two words, and they don't mean what most think they mean. But since I've lightened up, I've come to accept that since so many people understand what they are *intended* to mean, then they really do mean "much" or "many" (even though that's not what they mean at all, really). It's understood. But often what we write isn't so easily understood, and that's one large difference between good writing and bad writing. Good writing is understood.

See how picky I used to be?

I'm still picky about other things. For example, if you *don't* want your article published in the Newszine, then send it to us hand-written. Or write incomplete and grammatically confusing sentences. Or make a muddle of the organization. Or write something that isn't easily understood.

Of course, if you *do* want to be published in the Newszine, then you know what to do: write clearly, write interestingly, rewrite, rewrite, and rewrite.

Writing clearly is not difficult, but it is a chore. To start, make sure every sentence you write is one complete idea, not to mention also a complete sentence. Be sure that your paragraphs are unified by the same topic, and write them in a logical order.

To write interestingly, you need some imagination and talent. Fortunately, gamers are known for both of those qualities, and many of the submissions we receive are original, clever, or both. I'll elaborate on those points in a later installment of these notes.

By far the most important part of writing is rewriting. The best time to rewrite is *before* sending us your submission. Getting started on an article is probably the hardest part, and the feeling of finishing one is terrific. So it's often difficult to go back to give your work another glance. But reviewing your own work makes a tremendous difference to the final product, and as you get better at criticizing your own work, you'll find yourself becoming a stronger writer.

If you have trouble spotting the flaws in your own writing, get a smart friend to look it over for you. Eventually, though, you should be able to revise your own work. Try letting your "finished" article sit and cool for a few days before going back to revise it; you'll be surprised how much easier it is to find things you'd like to rewrite once you've put some distance between you and your article. And try revising it first by reading a printed copy, marking corrections with a pencil, highlighter, or whatever implement of destruction you best enjoy.

Check out the inside back cover of this issue for the Standard Disclosure Form and writers' guidelines which apply for any submissions to POLYHEDRON® Newszine or to the RPGA Network tournament program. Remember that each submission must be accompanied by that form, or we can't even look at it. Also be sure to read Kevin's article on tournament submissions; much of what he has to say applies equally well to submissions to the Newszine.

Enough of that, except that I'll come back to words again and more specifically. You may also notice that I get a kick out of using quotations like the one above. I'd get a bigger kick out of it if I knew many were catching the reference, or—better yet—looking it up. If you're the first person to write me a letter or send me a card (I especially love pretty postcards and greeting cards, and that's a blatant hint) identifying the quotation's source and author, then I'll send you a little prize and immortalize you in prose (or at least mention your name in this column). Don't call with your answer; the winner will be the first who writes.

The Living City

One of the most enjoyable parts of this job is getting to meddle in the affairs of Ravens Bluff, the Living City. And do we ever have big plans for Ravens Bluff over the next few years! Jean, Kevin, Harold, and I frequently find ourselves in impromptu brainstorming sessions when one of the four of us rushes in with an idea. Sometimes Jean has had to stop me in the middle of voicing some brave plan to tell me why it wouldn't work. "The players would hate that," she'll say. And I stare blankly back at her, replying, "But it's so cool! It solves so many problems. Why would they hate that?"

Jean must have thought me stupid, but really I was just ignorant.

My problem was that I hadn't actually played in a Living City tournament (I know, I know, I can hear the gasps of horror even now). But now that's partly remedied, and I've played in "To Live and Die in Ravens Bluff." (And my character lived! He survived!) Of course, I've also read a half dozen others over the past two months, and now I'm starting to write a few. Still, I know I haven't experienced enough of the city from the player's side. By next year's GEN CON® Game Fair, I reckon I'll have played a half dozen or more Living City tournaments to get more of a feel for the experience and to hear more about what all of you players like best and least about the LC events.

The gist of all this prelude is that we are wide open to suggestions on the future of Ravens Bluff. The population of the city has surged, and we're thinking of ways to keep the Living City fresh for veterans and attractive to newcomers. Many of the little cracks formed during the city's growing pains have already been patched, and the

Living City Consortium is hard at work establishing the expanded house rules we so dearly need. But it's you who play in Living City whose voice is most needed. Write to tell us what you'd like to see changed—or never changed—about Ravens Bluff and the Living City tournaments.

Contest!

Brian Blume, a frequent contributor to these pages, has provided us with yet another set of terrific maps for this issue's Living City article, "The Swineherd's House." But Brian's teeming imagination is so restless without more projects that he has come to us with his own set of one-page maps.

So where the heck is the adventure?

Make a photocopy of "The Vast Caverns" map on the back cover. Then label as many of the map areas as you wish and populate them, sending us your labelled map and encounter descriptions. It's that simple.

Of course, if you want to win the contest and a nifty prize, you should consider a few things. The best entries will likely be those that show how the various parts of the population cooperate or conflict with each other. They will answer such questions as: Is the population homogenous or mixed? What are the goals, desires, fears, and aspirations of the population? Why do they live underground? What is that gray stream in the map? Is it even water? You might also want to consider that the most interesting encounters don't always involve fighting creatures, though some do.

Use your imagination, then turn it into words, words, words. About 2,000 to 4,000 of them. And don't forget to reread and revise your work.

Send us your entry by March 1, 1993. The best entries will all win nifty prizes, and the very best one will see publication in these pages.

Look for more of Brian's "Uninhabited" series—and for more contests—in future issues.

Mascot Contest

Some months ago we ran a mascot contest, asking you to pick your favorite of the illustrations and to supply a name for it. Among the entries were some fervent admirers of one particular mascot and name, with over 70 identical postcards in one instance. Mascot #1 even had a lengthy petition for the name "Ike" (for icosahedron, a 20-sided polyhedron), and we nearly gave in to whimsy and chose the "Agnar the Destroyer" suggestion for the fairy-like mascot #4). But when the laughter subsided, our panel of judges best liked Alan Michell's suggestion of "Rapscallion" aka "Raps" for mascot #2.

Thanks to all those who entered, and congratulations to all the finalists who should by now have received their nifty prizes.

We have many RPGA Network patches on hand here at HQ, and we think they'd look much better on the jackets and satchels of the membership than they do stacked neatly in our cabinets. So let's pass them around a bit.

To get one of these rather nice patches, just send us a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a note explaining that it's a patch you want, and we'll send you one directly, as long as they last.

Aloha,

Dave

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Elminster's Everwinking Eye

Treasures Of The Vast, Part Three

Ed Greenwood

"Treasure, lad? Spells, for some; gems and coins, to most—but to me, who's had it all down the years, I gloat over treasure when I find trust, love, and friendship. But ye're too young to agree with that. Well, I'll grant ye the cold and clinking stuff pays more bills."

Mirt "the Moneylender" of Waterdeep, as told to the young Harper Oblin Sharr, *Year of the Wave*

Our treasure tour of the Vast continues, from High Haspur on. Elminster gave me the quotation above and bid all greedy adventurers think about it. When I asked him what good that would do, he wrinkled his lips and said, "Well, it'll mean they think about something, just once." Then he shook his head and walked away, muttering, "Adventurers . . . ."

High Haspur

This mountain village stands south of Elvenblood Pass, where Helve's Trail from Maerstar meets the High Trail from Ravens Bluff to Procampur. High Haspur is reputed to be a place of riches, and the ruling Morninglight gnomes are said to be the only active miners and gold-smelters operating in the Vast. This clan operates underground, digging tunnels from their gold-cellars and the caverns where they assemble and test their many inventions. Among the Morninglight inventions are many automated multiple-bolt crossbows, various nasty traps, mobile corridor-blocking armor-shields, and other devices that enable a few gnomes to defend a subterranean area against many human or orc raiders.

A shaft leading down from a fireplace in *The Elf in Armor*, the excellent inn run by the Morninglights, is said to be the main way into the underground family holdings. Certain elderly dwarves who hold grudges against the gnome clan can be persuaded by drink and gold to tell something of the traps in the shaft and the location of various caverns.

There is also a local dwarven legend about a natural cavern in the mountains somewhere northwest of High Haspur, a cave entirely lined with flashing and glittering beljurils (see the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* hardcover sourcebook). These seawater-green, fist-sized, and very hard gems periodically blaze with light, briefly giving off enough radiance to read by. Much prized all over Faerun, they are worth 5,000 gp each; but Elminster says darkly that all who try to find the cavern either disappear or are soon found dead, each with a single beljuril crammed into his mouth.

Hlintar

A crossroads town always jingling with money in the pockets, purses, and saddlebags of the busy merchants passing through it, Hlintar is a place of much intrigue and wealth.

A traveler can hear tales of double-crossing merchants who didn't live to reclaim their hidden savings in every bar. Folk in Hlintar were so rich, the tales go, that they ran out of places to hide their loot. And too many thieves were growing fat just pulling at loose stones in the street and in every chimney, so Hlintar's enterprising local merchants undertook a banking service of sorts.

Now that the local shrine to Waukeen has been abandoned, Hlintar's temple to Chauntea has taken over the "silent vault" service. Now sensitive goods of all sorts—from stolen statues of recognizable monarchs to the bodies of prematurely and conveniently deceased relatives—are stored out of sight in monster and spell-guarded vaults under the temple for a one gp/strongchest/month fee. Few thieves try to pry into these holdings. The guards include many "battle horror" shadowguards (animated suits of armor: see the Helmed Horror MC entry in the Halls of the High King, or in the revised boxed *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting boxed set*) and at least one watchghost (a powerful undead detailed in the *Ruins of Undermountain boxed set*).

Rumor has it that Hlintar is still stuffed with caches of coins and gems: thieves tell each other to test every panel and pillar for gold bricks slathered with clay to look like normal building materials. In at least six cases, Elminster can attest, the thieves' hint is true!

One old Hlintar habit was to hide wealth in ancestral crypts. The less wealthy resorted to hollow cavities in the headstones of loved ones—but this led to smash-and-grab thief gangs hanging around the graveyard day and night, waiting to relieve the bereaved of any wealthy they might happen to be carrying. There were a few pitched battles between rival thieving gangs, and between thieves and bodyguards hired by bereaved Hlintarans, so the habit of hiding gold in graves lost popularity. It is quite possible, local lore whispers, that some caches of treasure remain in Hlintar's knoll-top graveyard, thanks to the thieves and some ghouls that have arisen from graves since.

King's Reach

This is the largest smelting center in the Vast, the source of many trade-bars of iron and silver, and palm-ingots of nickel and copper. Zinc and gold are also found in lesser amounts.

The trade-metal all winds up in well-guarded fortress "stronghouses," guarded by men whose crossbows fire sleep-poisoned quarrels. Orc and brigand raiders try their luck fairly often, having more luck attacking mule-trains of ore in the mountains than in overwhelming the defenses of King's Reach.

Adventurers and mercenary warriors do a brisk business as hireling-guards seeing ore-trains safely to the smelters—and just about everyone in King's Reach has ventured out alone or with a trusted friend or two (trusted at the outset, at least!), seeking that rich vein of gold that will make them wealthy for life.

There are small but very pure gold deposits in the Giantspike Mountains east and north of King's Reach (the Troll Mountains to the north and west have been worked out, and the resulting disused mine-passages that honeycomb them have become infested with monsters). The dwarves of old knew of this gold, but their attempts to reach it attracted much orc attention. Orcs still lurk in the peaks and mountain-valleys, as do bugbears, human brigands, and other predators. And if a prospector ever finds gold, finding a way to get it out and reach King's

Reach unnoticed becomes the paramount challenge of survival!

Lone "gold-crazed" prospectors are said to live like beasts high in the mountains, attacking those who venture too near. There are tales of caverns stacked high with dwarven gold, each guarded by a "lone wolf" prospector who managed to slay the dragon or wyvern who gathered the hoard. Over the years, some of these tales have proven to be true; Lashan of Scardale is said to have founded the treasury that drove his dreams of empire (in the early days) by leading a loyal band of followers in a successful attempt to find and empty one of these "gold caves."

Kurth

This walled town at the northern mouth of Three Trees Pass is a grim, watchful place—like its founder, Kurth "Bandit-Slayer." Kurth serves as a caravan-stop and farm-market town, and boasts a brewery, two mills, a large stockyards, and a wheel-wright of skill and reputation (who keeps a stock of wheels and snow-runners on hand for quick repairs). It also has recurring water shortages and magically recirculates its water—which probably accounts for the thick, rough, licorice-like "ropey" taste of the dark, foamy local beer

Kurth has always had a reputation as a place where many riches are hidden (probably in cellars, storage-shafts, attics, and walled into chimneys), because many pirates come here to retire. In Calaunt and Tantras, Kurth is sometimes called "Pirates' Rest," and merchants just starting into trade sometimes come here in search of sponsors. Much shady business goes on in back rooms all over town, and in *The Gauntlet and Girdle* tavern.

On the western edge of town is "Tweenwalls," a district of shanties and tumbledown stables and warehouses outside the repaired walls. Kurth was once larger, its walls encompassing a larger area—but orc raids showed the locals just how long a wall they could defend with swords and spells.

Much of Tweenwalls is ruined, and at its heart rises the blackened, over-grown mound that was once Feljack's Hall. Built by a long-missing adventurer, this mansion burned down a decade ago. Locals who searched the still-smoking ruins for riches were slain horribly by a giant-sized skeleton that arose from the ashes wielding a black magical blade called a *shadow blade* by one wizard.

Few cared to investigate further, and those who did were found dismembered on the street leading up to the ruins the next morning. Recently, many human skeletons bearing swords have been seen roaming the burned ruins on moonlit nights. Their source is unknown, but Feljack's treasure, if any still exists, still hasn't been recovered.

Maerstar

This farm and quarrying town stands at the meeting of Helve's Trail from High Haspur and The North Road that links Procampur with the northern Vast by way of the Glorming Pass. Maerstar is known as a horse center; the large, sleek black horses bred here are highly prized throughout the Inner Sea lands. It is not known as a place of much wealth, but rather hardworking prosperity.

Its well-trampled paddocks have been used to hide treasure, however. During the Time of Troubles, many merchants of Tsurlagol and Procampur fled to their country houses in Maerstar only to find themselves beset by looting mobs of wandering, displaced men from the destruction in Tantras and the strife in Calaunt and Mulmaster.

Many of the wealthy hid their riches under the dung and churned earth of the paddocks, but not all of the wealthy survived to dig up their riches when the Troubles were over. Local rumor has it that at least two holdings still lie beneath the earth somewhere in Maerstar: the moonstone and pearl collection of the merchant Uligker Oloskar of Procampur, and a hoard of coins and trade-bars belonging to the locksmith and purveyor of trained dancers, Shondarl Stonegiant.

This town is also the home of the Moonlit Tower. This strange apparition can be seen only when the rays of the full moon fall upon a crag northwest of the town. At such times, a small, slender tower appears there. It glows blue-gray as if fashioned of solid moonlight, and it can be entered. Its interior consists of seven rooms and a rooftop level joined by a spiral stair of floating stone treads without rail or visible means of support. Spells have unusual effects when cast inside the Tower.

Some sages believe the Moonlit Tower travels about several planes or other worlds. Those in it when it fades away are seldom seen in the Realms again. When it appears, it may be empty or may hold rare and awesome monsters. Sometimes these beasts guard treasure, but on other occasions they bring disease, plague, and eggs that hatch into other harmful monsters when taken out of the Tower.

Mossbridges

This town serves Ravens Bluff as a caravan staging area, stockyards, warehousing, and horse-selling stables center. Merchants who don't want to stay in the city often use it as a base, and a few who dare not enter Ravens Bluff stay here, their clients or creditors coming out to them.

The builders of the great multi-span bridge that carries the Coast Road that links Ravens Bluff and Tantras over the Fire River dwell in Mossbridges and are paid by both cities to keep the bridge in good repair. They have been known to hide bodies, treasure, and certain small but recognizable items in the bridge-pilings in exchange for sizable bribes, and can be contacted through Klonalogh Umesker, whose office is three doors north of *The Blushing Gynoshphinx* inn.

A lot of money flows through Mossbridges, and it is policed by the paladin Rulisqer of Tyr (LG hm Pal 10), who leads followers to ensure that his belief that through lawful behavior and local safety, happiness and prosperity is allowed to all.

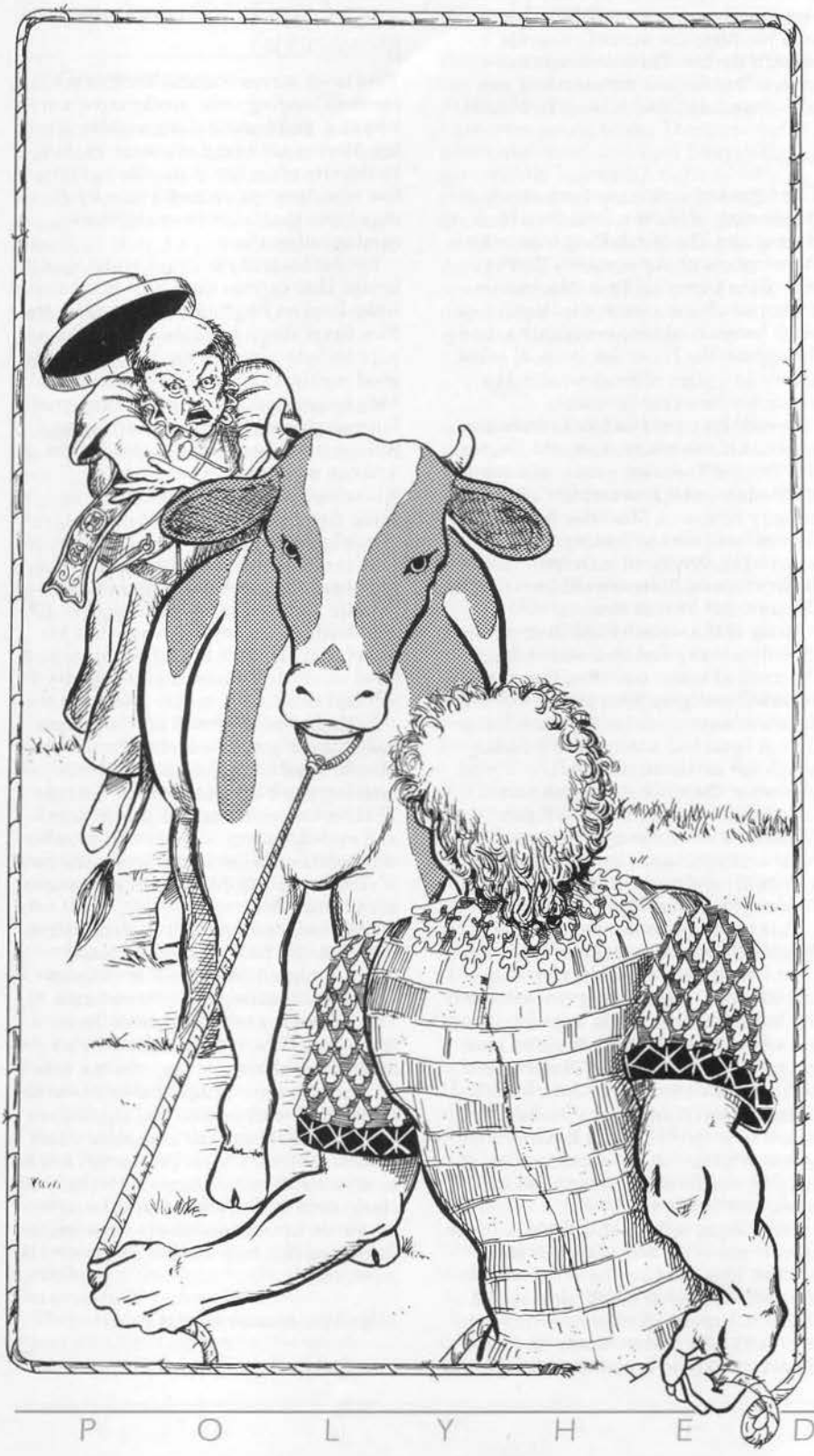
Rulisqer keeps brawls off the streets and thieves' guilds out of town, so Mossbridges is used as a "no swords" meeting place by foes wishing to trade. This, in turn, encourages investment and even banking. Would-be thieves be warned: the gargoyles adorning the roof of Gladragon's Gold & Gems exchange aren't just adornments.

Treasure is everywhere in Mossbridges, but most of it has owners. The place comes equipped with the most diligent and fast-responding law officers in the Vast. There is a tale that one of the retired smugglers in town is actually an amphibious shapechanger, who can take on a giant octopus shape and swim out to do business with pirates who signal from off-shore, she keeps her loot under water, hidden not far offshore. One tavern drinker says it's all inside giant clams that will clamp shut to trap anyone but the rightful owner, but he was hardly sober when delivering this information, and it may be pure fancy.

More Vast treasures next time.

❑

Shhh!



by Mary Konczyk

DM™ Background

The player characters in this adventure are servants of the Temple of Zorakiah. And, like all of the servants, they are priests who live and work in silence and peace on the temple grounds. The priests farm, manufacture dairy products, and spend many of their waking hours in prayer—and watching the convicts.

Because the temple is dedicated to law, order, and discipline, convicts from nearby communities are sentenced to time at the temple, where they are put to work in the fields under the priests' direction.

While the majority of local residents and the priests are satisfied with the arrangement, Sean Larken, an elven troublemaker, is not. Sean, who has dubbed himself Liberator, has dedicated himself to freeing the oppressed, including the convicts sentenced to time at the Temple of Zorakiah. He operates out of a camp several miles from the temple and periodically descends upon the Temple, freeing the oppressed convicts.

This adventure centers on the PCs escorting one convict to the Hill of Thorns, where he is to be executed for murdering two acolytes. The high priest hopes Liberator will strike along the way and that the PCs will deal with him by passing off a cursed scroll.

To complicate the PCs' task, they must keep to their vows of silence on the mission. They are allowed to speak only at certain times. These are:

* During mealtimes.
* In chanting prayers to Zorakiah up to 12 times a day.
* In brief, chanted prayers once per hour—on the hour.

The PCs can say anything as long as it can be passed off as a prayer and lasts no more than one minute. These prayers must be addressed to Zorakiah. Prayers not addressed in this matter are a violation of the priest's oath. Violations incur the god's displeasure in the form of −1 on "to hit," damage, and saving throws per transgression. Of course, the PCs likely will not discover the seriousness of the penalty for transgressions until they are in the thick of battle.

If the PCs elect to communicate by writing notes back and forth, picture what this looks like. The PCs have rolled parchment, ink bottles, and quills. Writing while they walk is not productive, although not impossible. Further, writing in this manner makes it easy for the prisoner to attempt an escape. PCs who quickly abandon their writing to pursue the prisoner or to draw weapons undoubtedly drop their parchment, ink, and quills. No ink, no more messages.

Player's Introduction

The temple of Zorakiah, god of law and justice, has long been at peace with the surrounding communities. Citizens often rely on the temple priests for healing when diseases sweep the towns, and they rest easy knowing that criminals are held at the temple and forced to do menial labor as a sentence for their crimes. The prisoners are guarded by the priests and acolytes of the temple and are treated well, though of course it is sometimes necessary to use disciplinary measures.

Despite the watchful priests, there have been several escapes recently.

An elf who calls himself "Liberator" claims to have aided in those escapes and has vowed there will be many more.

The high priest has devised a plan to put an end to this affront using one of the prisoners—a thief who is sentenced to die because he killed two acolytes during an escape attempt. You six priests have been selected to escort this thief to the Hill of Thorns, where you will execute him either at noon, or as the sun sets. The timing, of course, will depend on how long it has taken you to get to the hill. The high priest believes Liberator will, in his flamboyant style, attempt to ride to the rescue.

The high priest has prepared a specially cursed scroll which, when read, will cause the Liberator to sicken whenever he comes within 10 miles of the temple. This scroll must somehow be placed upon Liberator's person while he attempts to free the convict. The high priest believes the upstart elf will read the scroll out of curiosity. This will call the curse down upon him.

Your mission is to escort the thief to the Hill of Thorns and watch out for Liberator, who could strike anywhere along the way. You are not to kill Liberator, as he is a fearsome fighter. The lives of the servants of the Temple of Zorakiah are far too valuable to throw away on such a worthless individual. You are merely to make sure he somehow gets the scroll—whether by planting it on him or by making sure he steals it. If might be necessary to relinquish the prisoner to accomplish your goal. It would be a small price to pay to be free from that elf.

At dinner the day before your departure, the high priest addresses you:

"I will take advantage of this mealtime, during which Zorakiah graciously releases us from our vows of silence, to give you my blessing and remind you that although you travel beyond the confines of our temple, you remain bound by our silence rule. You are fortunate that this week falls during the Festival of the 12 Attributes of Zorakiah. As is tradition during this time, the god mercifully permits that in addition to the seven verbal prayers at dawn, the hourly praises, and the vesper chant, we may each offer him 12 additional prayers, chanted to him in our own words—provided that we return to our silence before a minute's sands have fallen in the hourglass. You may still speak freely at mealtimes and in casting your spells, of course. I need not remind you of the gravity of breaking your vow of silence.

"Garwood, I trust that you will lead your brethren well. All honor and praise to Zorakiah!" He makes the sacred sign of Zorakiah, raising both hands to shoulder level, palms up, to symbolize the pans of a balance, then bringing fingertips together, pointing up, to symbolize the blade of a sword.

The high priest sips his drink, eyes you carefully, then continues. "Your route will be direct. This will help ensure that Liberator strikes. You must take the field path, then follow the chasm path. Travel time along these paths will be approximately six to eight hours, not including time for meals or sleeping. You must carry out the execution two days from now, so you are limited to the amount of time you can sit back and enjoy nature. Dallying too long will no doubt upset our god.

"Therefore, one more time will I reiterate when you can speak. At mealtimes. Up to 12 times per day in special prayers. This is in addition to dawn, vespers, and hourly prayers. All prayers, of course, must be in the form of a chant, addressed to Zorakiah. Each prayer cannot exceed one minute. Gestures to communicate with each other, such as pantomime, and writing is acceptable. Violations incur the wrath of Zorakiah.

"Here is a pair of manacles and some stout rope. Secure the prisoner as you desire. Mealtime draws to a close. I must be silent now."

The high priest will not answer any questions, nor should the PCs talk, as mealtime is over and the vow of silence again holds sway.

The Prisoner

Lucien was caught burglarizing the home of a wealthy merchant nearly six months ago. Though this was the crime that earned him a sentence at the temple, it was far from his first offense. He began his thieving career to keep his family from starving, but eventually he came to enjoy the excitement of breaking into people's homes.

He tried to escape his 12-year-sentence at the temple by making a run for it while he was working in the fields. When the two acolytes guarding him tried to stop him, he hit them with his fists. Unfortunately, Lucien wore a set of iron manacles at the time, and the impact killed the acolytes. Lucien considers the priests of the temple a pack of narrow-minded hypocrites. He believes in situational ethics, so the inflexible teachings of the temple are abhorrent to him.

Lucien wants to be free, and during the course of this adventure he will work his bonds in an attempt to get loose. Of course, he will be careful so the PCs do not spot him.

Prime times for escape attempts include: 1) If the PCs get into a discussion amongst themselves and pay less attention to him. 2) If the PCs begin writing notes back and forth. PCs writing notes can't concentrate on the prisoner. 3) If the PCs get into combat with the alu-fiend or leucrotta. 4) The bridges, as mentioned in the encounters. 5) Other opportunities as they present themselves.

Lucien Vellared: Int Average; AL N; AC 7 (Dex); MV 12; HD 5; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Swimming (18), escape artist (15), endurance, tightrope walking (19), read lips (15), appraising (19).

Climb walls: 80%. Lucien's other thieving abilities are irrelevant for this adventure.

The Field Path

The path the PCs must take to the Hill of Thorns is a narrow dirt road that passes through the temple's lands. To the left are walled meadows where the sheep and cattle are grazed; to the right are fields of grain.

> You strike out on the path to begin your mission. To your left are meadows where dozens of sheep and nearly one hundred dairy cattle owned by your temple quietly graze. To the right you see endless fields of grain. The gentle breeze blows the grain, making it look like a sea of dark yellow. You notice a pair of prisoners working in the fields, scaring animals away from the wheat. The priest guarding the prisoners waves a friendly greeting to you.
>
> Farther down the road you notice the wheat to the right is rustling in a peculiar manner. It appears that some large creature is moving amid the wheat stalks, likely making a meal of the crop.

A few moments more scrutiny reveals that a black and white calf has gotten into the wheat and is munching away, destroying a hefty amount of grain. The party passed a gate in the meadow wall about a hundred feet back, through which the cow could be driven back into the pasture. Point out the gate. If the PCs avoid the cow, continue to the next encounter. However, if they attempt to move the cow or go closer, they will have a fight on their hands.

The cow is really Culbraxa, an alu-fiend under a *shape change* spell. She is recuperating after a battle with a paladin and does not want to go home until she is fully healed—she has an image to uphold.

If the PCs attempt to move her, she tries to *charm* the closest one and telepathically instructs him to touch her. This will allow her to hit point drain the priest, which will help her heal. The alu-fiend tries repeated *charms* until she is discovered.

If the PCs threaten Culbraxa, she changes into her true form and attacks with her short sword. If she is brought to within 10 hit points of her life, she casts *dimension door* to escape.

Alu-fiend: Int Average; AL CE; AC 3 (*ring of protection* +2); MV 12, Fl 15; HD 5; hp 40 (currently 26); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (fist) or 1-6+2 (short sword +2); MR 30%; SZ M.

The alu-fiend is harmed only by magical or cold-iron weapons. On a successful roll to hit for "hit point drain," she saps her victim for 1-8 hit points, healing herself for half that number rounded up. She has the following spell-like powers which she can use at will, one per round: *charm person, ESP, shape change,* and *suggestion.* She can cast *dimension door* once a day. Unlike other alu-fiends, Culbraxa cannot *shape change* into various humanoid forms. She is cursed and can only *shape change* into animal forms.

Following this battle, the characters can tell by the position of the sun that it is noon and therefore time to eat. During the one-hour meal, they are permitted to talk. The prisoner will be glad to voice his opinions of their beliefs and lifestyle—and will do so in a most annoying manner until they shut him up.

The Bridge

> The next two miles pass by uneventfully. The air is pleasantly warm, the birds provide beautiful traveling music, and walking is giving you just the right amount of exercise. You certainly needed this mission. Your prisoner isn't enjoying himself, however. He is carefully scrutinizing the countryside and muttering to himself.
>
> Ahead is a suspension bridge that crosses a sluggishly-flowing river. The prisoner seems a little nervous as he stares at the water far below. Perhaps he doesn't know how to swim or he doesn't like heights. Or perhaps he is thinking about his impending death.

The suspension bridge has been tampered with. The rope rails that used to be set waist-high and shoulder-high have been cut. The PCs cannot detect this as a trap. Because of the absent rails, the bridge is prone to swing. One misstep will dump whoever is crossing into the river.

The bridge will stay balanced only if pairs of people with similar weights cross together, side by side. This will become apparent to PCs experimenting with the bridge. If the PCs do not balance the bridge, any PC crossing must roll under half of his or her Dexterity score or plummet into the water.

The prisoner has been carefully working his bonds loose and intends to make his move here. He knows how to swim—expertly. He is just trying to get the PCs to believe he doesn't know how and is afraid of the water. If he is not closely watched while others are on the bridge, he will free one hand from the manacles (allow any character who has stated he's watching the prisoner an Intelligence check to see if he notices) and run for the bridge, trying to topple anyone on it into the water. The prisoner will jump for the river if he is not stopped, and swim downstream with the current.

The river is nine feet deep in the center and 18 feet across, with a fast current. Characters will be swept down-stream at a rate of about seven miles an hour. Characters in the water must make a Strength roll each round to determine if they can keep from going under. If a PC fails a Strength check, he or she is in danger of drowning. PCs drown in a number of rounds equal to their Constitution scores unless they are rescued. PCs who can swim and are relatively unencumbered do not have to make Strength or Constitution checks.

If the PCs effect a reasonable attempt to recapture the thief, allow it to work.

The Chasm Path

> Your path takes you toward the great chasm. The trail leads south, beyond the temple property, then winds steeply up to the top of a tree-covered plateau. After a few miles it turns north-west and then continues on through the woods, running parallel to the edge of a cliff.

The winding trail by which the characters reached the top of this cliff seems to be the only easy way back down; the drop gets steeper the farther northwest the characters walk. For about an hour nothing unusual happens. There are deer which freeze into graceful statues as the party passes. There are birds calling in the trees and small animals scampering about. After about two hours, the party hears a cry for help. It sounds like a woman, weak and fright

ened, and the voice is coming from the direction of the cliff. The "woman" is actually a dangerous leucrotta looking for victims.

> Your quiet walk is suddenly interrupted. "Help me!" cries a voice. It sounds like a woman. The voice is weak and frightened. "I'm down here!" she calls. "Is anyone there? Please, please help me before I fall."

The PCs can easily find where the "woman" is, although they cannot see her. The leucrotta is on a ledge partway down the cliff, about 20 feet below the party. If the PCs communicate with her (a possible violation of their silence oath), she whimpers that she fell over the cliff while hunting deer. She thinks she has broken her left leg. It is impossible to see her ledge from above. The ledge is about four feet wide but is obscured by the shrubs and underbrush that grow along the steep face of the cliff. Broken branches seem to back up her story.

She says there is a hollow in the face of the cliff that she's using as a shelter. She wants a strong PC to climb down and carry her up. She cannot move enough to reach a rope.

PCs who closely study the area can find a deer path going down the cliff, but it is too steep for a human to climb down without the aid of a rope. The PCs will not find human footprints around the cliff edge. However, there is no dirt in which the woman could have left prints. There are deer prints on the deer path.

If one or more PCs climb down, the leucrotta attacks. If she is reduced to five hit points or less, she attempts to flee down the deer path. Pursuit is impossible.

Leucrotta (1): Int Average; AL CE; AC 4; MV 18; HD 6+1; hp 31; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 3-18; SA Special; SD Kick in retreat; SZ L; ML 14; XP 975 each.

The Chasm Bridge

Nothing eventful happens as the party walks through the woods. However, the prisoner will continue to criticize the Temple of Zorakiah and attempt to make the PCs upset. Eventually, the group reaches the next suspension bridge. The ropes tying this suspension bridge to its supports on the near side—the side by the PCs—have been cut. The bridge hangs down the opposite wall of the chasm, which is 40 feet across. Again, the prisoner will attempt to

jump into the river to escape. However, it is likely the PCs will be more closely watching him this time.

> You continue on your journey, knowing there are not too many miles left to traverse before reaching the Hill of Thorns. Ahead is another suspension bridge. The ropes that would have tied the bridge to this side of the chasm have been cut, and the bridge hangs flat against the far side of the chasm. The cliff sides are too steep to climb down. And if you go around the chasm—which could take at least a week—you will miss your deadline of executing the prisoner. Your god will be displeased. The high priest will be unhappy. You will have failed in your mission. What are you to do?

If the PCs spend several rounds examining their surroundings, they can find a tree which will help get them across.

> There is a large tree growing at an angle over the chasm's edge. A limb extends out over the chasm by nearly 20 feet. However, the chasm is twice that wide, and the bottom is about 50 feet below.

Indeed, climbing down the edges of the chasm would be foolish and possibly fatal. However, the tree is another alternative. Characters could climb onto the branch safely up to 10 feet out if they are heavy, 12 feet out if are of average weight, and 14 feet out if they are slight. At these distances the branch will bend, but will not break. There is a 20% cumulative chance per additional foot climbed that the branch will break between the character and the tree trunk. If the branch breaks, all the PCs on it will be plunged 50 feet to the river below.

The PCs could tie a rope to the branch and swing over to the cut bridge. They could use a second rope to bring the bridge back to their side of the chasm and refastened it to its supporting posts.

Hungry Prisoner

If the prisoner did not get away in the previous encounter, he demands to be fed. It doesn't matter how long ago he ate, he claims he is hungry and wants a last meal. It is up to the PCs whether they comply. If they do, he eats slowly, talks quite a bit between bites, and complains about the food. He does not want to die and is dragging out the expedition as long as possible.

Blind Faith

A priest of Bithumy, the local river god, is using this path. The priest is blind, but his cooshee guide dog has very good hearing and lets him know people are approaching from the opposite direction. The cooshee tugged twice on the blind man's hand to indicate the oncoming party has a priest in its ranks.

> Another is using this path. An elderly man walks toward you. He is using a long, white staff for support with his right hand. His left holds the leash of a beautiful brown and green dog. The dog looks up at you, wags its tail, and gently tugs twice on the old man's hand.
>
> "Oh," the old man says glancing in your direction. His eyes are glazed over, and you cannot tell who he is looking at. "A priest," he says.
>
> The dog tugs on his hand again.
>
> "No. More than one priest. Good. It is a pleasure to meet people of the same vocation. I have been traveling this path for quite some time, and I want to make sure I am going in the right direction. Please, kind priests, give me directions to the Temple of Zorakiah."

The blind priest wants directions to the PCs' temple because he is friends with one of the lesser priests there and he intends to visit and give his friend a birthday gift. The blind priest is hard of hearing, and the PCs will have to speak up. If the PCs do not talk to him, he becomes upset and calls them rude and uncaring. His Zorakiah priest friend always talked to him. Of course, the blind man always visited during mealtimes.

The dog is at least as intelligent as the blind man. It can understand any of the PCs' visual gestures and can get the blind priest to the temple based on their directions.

Blind priest: Int Average; AL NG; AC 4 (bracers); MV 9; HD 9; hp45; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+3 (staff +3); SZ M.

Spells memorized: *Cure light wounds, command, detect evil, protection from evil, charm person or mammal, dust devil, heat metal, know alignment, call lightning, create food and water, tree, cure serious wounds, speak with plants, flame strike*

Cooshee: Int Average; AL N; AC 5; MV 15, sprint 21; HD 3+3; hp 25; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 7-10; SA Overbearing; SZ M.

Hill of Thorns

> At last you have reached your goal, the Hill of Thorns. It will not be a long walk to the top of the hill, only about 200 feet. You see a few small animals scamper out of your path. A wide-eyed brown bunny looks up at you and then bounds away. Your prisoner shivers as he stares at the myriad of thorn bushes that dot the hill.

The Hill of Thorns is so called because it is covered by thorn trees. It is uninhabited except for rabbits and other small animals. It is a traditional place of sacrifice for the priests of Zorakiah. At the top of the hill is a clearing ringed by stones carved with words of praise to Zorakiah and mystical symbols expressing his perfection. In the center of the ring of stones is a slab covered with runes and symbols. There is also a wooden stake with plenty of firewood piled around it.

This situation will present a moral dilemma for the PCs. Are they willing to kill the prisoner and carry out the death sentence? As the PCs mull over the task, the prisoner demands to speak. If the PCs do not gag him, he begins:

> "So this is your idea of justice—killing a man for the crime of being too poor to feed his family! I got a wife and two children to feed, and no trade. What's to become of them now? When they have to steal so they can eat, are you going to make slaves out of them, too? I'll bet you're not going to feed them, or find them work. Your god doesn't care about them until they break somebody's precious rules. And you think that's justice!" His anger and emotion overwhelm him, and he suddenly falls silent.

Hiding amid the thorns is Liberator and his horse. He intends to charge the priests as they tie the prisoner to the stake or put him on the slab. If the PCs let the thief go, Liberator will not strike, although he will watch to make sure the thief gets away.

It is possible the PCs will decide to let the thief go, but only after using him as a lure for Liberator. Play out this final encounter based on the PCs' actions.

Liberator will approach from the direction with the fewest priests between him and the prisoner. Liberator plans to leap from his saddle, cut the thief free, and defend him while the thief mounts the horse. Then Liberator will vault into the saddle with the thief and ride away. His actions will vary based on what the PCs do.

Liberator doesn't want to kill anyone, so he will flee with the prisoner at the earliest opportunity, trying to avoid combat. However, he will not leave without the prisoner.

If the PCs break their oath of silence and talk with Liberator, he lectures them about freedom, honor, and the value of life. The PCs will not be able to convince him their order is acting correctly. Liberator has his mind made up.

Liberator, Sean Larken, elven fighter: Int Very; AL CG; AC −3 (Dex, field plate); MV 9; HD 9; hp 68; THAC0 12; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-10+3 (long sword +3; SZ M.

Liberator also carries a lance. His long sword, Freedom, is intelligent and possesses the following abilities: *remove curse* and *dispel magic* once a day, and *heal* once a week. On a successful hit, the sword has a 90% chance to sever ropes and a 50% chance to sever chains.

Resolution

The PCs are considered successful in the eyes of the high priest if they placed the scroll on Liberator. Of course, the PCs and the high priest have no idea that Liberator's sword can easily remove the curse. Liberator intends to plague the temple and the priests for a very long time. ❑

Servant Garwood

6th level human male priest

STR: 12
INT: 13
WIS: 17
DEX: 14
CON: 10
CHR: 10
AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 20
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
THAC0: 16

Age: 68
Height: 5′9″
Weight: 176 lbs.

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, mace, hammer
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Cooking (14), etiquette (10), singing (10), religion (18), read/write Common (15)
Magic Items: *Staff +1, boots of elvenkind, ring of swimming, potion of sweetwater*
Spells/Day: 5 5 3
You have access to the following spheres: All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Guardian, and Protection
Equipment: Chain mail, one torch, one flask of oil, one vial holy water, two water flasks, canvas bag, scrollcase with cursed scroll, one day's rations, quill, bottle of ink, two blank scrolls, small knife, white robe, black cowl

You are feeling your age . . . unfortunately. Perhaps because of that you inwardly doubt your ability to lead this expedition. Still, you are the most experienced of the six.

Your joints are stiff, and sometimes your memory is a little faulty. And, of course, you are painfully self-conscious about your increasing frailty. Age. It is a blessing to live so long. But it is a curse to be old.

You suspect the others in your group are concerned about you as well. Perhaps they have a right to be, but you will do your best to show them "old" does not mean "infirm." You have a wisdom all of them lack. In fact, you are concerned about them and their abilities. You wonder about the rules of your order as taught by the temple. Your god, Zorakiah, demands retribution from every transgressor. And although the god is always just, you sometimes ponder if it isn't better to consider the circumstances surrounding a transgression, or the motives of the transgressor. Perhaps the Temple puts too small a value on mercy. Perhaps law and justice are not always the same.

Servant Straitor

4th level human male priest

STR: 17
INT: 11
WIS: 17
DEX: 10
CON: 16
CHR: 10
AC Normal: 4
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 31
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
THAC0: 18

Age: 36
Height: 6′
Weight: 200 lbs

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Religion (17), herbalism (9), swimming (17), spellcraft (9)
Magic Items: *Mace +2, powder of coagulation* (two pinches), *powder of magic detection* (two pinches)
Spells/Day: 5 4
You have access to the following spheres: All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Guardian, and Protection
Equipment: Chain mail, shield, one torch, one flask of oil, one vial of holy water, three water flasks, canvas bag, one day's rations, quill, bottle of ink, two blank scrolls, small knife, white robe, black cowl

Though not old, you are from "the old school." You find comfort in history, the rules, rituals, and tradition. You are particularly opposed to the creeping liberalism which has tainted some servants of the temple—especially the insidious belief that your god Zorakiah may allow the requirements of the law (whether it be the legal code, manners and decorum, civilized conduct, or the rules of the temple) to be tempered according to individual circumstances. If this sort of bleeding-heart pulp is allowed to continue, the world will end up going to the elves! Rules are rules. Laws are laws. Tradition must hold sway. Vows are also important.

While on this mission, you must look to Garwood for leadership. He was appointed the leader, and therefore according to the rules his decisions stand. However, if Garwood were to stray from the rules, it would fall to you and the others to see that the rules are upheld.

Servant Laska

3rd level human female priest

STR: 12
INT: 12
WIS: 18
DEX: 18
CON: 17
CHR: 15
AC Normal: 0
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 21
Alignment: Neutral Good
THAC0: 20

Age: 18
Height: 5′ 6″
Weight: 126 lbs.

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Religion (18), dancing (18), cooking (12), swimming (12)
Magic Items: *Necklace of memory enhancement, staff +1*
Spells/Day: 4 3
You have access to the following spheres: All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Guardian, and Protection
Equipment: Chain mail, shield, one torch, one flask of oil, two vials of holy water, one water flask, canvas bag, one day's rations, quill, bottle of ink, two blank scrolls, small knife, white robe, black cowl

You came to the temple four years ago, leaving your merchant parents on good terms. You did not fit in there, as the family tried every day to make more and more money. You only wanted to give your money to those who were poor and who had fallen on hard times. You enjoy life at the temple. Your life there is peaceful and nearly worry-free. Still, you must work hard to understand all the rules. The temple teaches that kindness is important, but only to a point. It teaches that people are poor because they have not learned to help themselves.

Your life changed one night at dinner when you glanced across the women's table and your eyes met those of a handsome priest at the men's table—Leavitt. You can't stop thinking about him. It must be love. But will it be unrequited love? Priests are not permitted to marry at the temple. You must think about this, decide what you want to do with your life. This mission will help. Leavitt was assigned to the group. You will be able to talk with him at meal times.

Servant Leavitt

4th level human male priest

STR: 17
INT: 11
WIS: 16
DEX: 17
CON: 15
CHR: 17
AC Normal: 1
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 22
Alignment: Neutral Good
THAC0: 18

Age: 24
Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 181 lbs

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Religion (16), dancing (17), weather sense (15), fire-building (15), rope use (17)
Magic Items: *Mace +1, Puchezma's powder of edible objects*
Spells/Day: 5 4
You have access to the following spheres: All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Guardian, and Protection
Equipment: Chain mail, shield, one torch, two flasks oil, one vial holy water, one water flask, canvas bag, one day's rations, quill, bottle of ink, two blank scrolls, small knife, white robe, black cowl, 30' rope

When you were only 13 years old your parents sent you away to become a Servant of the temple. At first you fit in, accepting all the rules and laws, following all the vows to the letter—including the vow of silence. The vow of silence you all took is one of the order's most revered oaths. You speak only when allowed—prayers and meals.

However, lately you have begun to question the temple's strict nature. There are prayers for everything, rituals for everything. What, you wonder, is really the point? Shouldn't law and order be a means to an end rather than an end?

You do not believe that your god sees only right or wrong, with no degrees between. You suspect the priests through the years have become so caught up with the rules and laws that they have created the black and white barriers. The only reason you have not left the service of the temple is Laska. You have loved her since the first time you saw her. If you could only convince her to leave the temple with you! You will try. But it is hard to persuade someone when you are vowed to silence except at meals. Perhaps the silence vow is not so important where love is concerned.

Servant Katan

4th level human male priest

STR: 18
INT: 14
WIS: 15
DEX: 16
CON: 17
CHR: 11
AC Normal: 1
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 25
Alignment: Lawful Good
THAC0: 18

Age: 40
Height: 5' 6"
Weight: 168 lbs

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Religion (15), jumping (18), running (11)
Magic Items: *Mace +1, shield +1, potion of sweetwater*
Spells/Day: 5 3
You have access to the following spheres: All, Animal, Charm, Divination, Healing, Plant, Protection, Sun
Equipment: Chain mail, one torch, one flask oil, three vials holy water, one water flask, canvas bag, one day's rations, quill, bottle of ink, two blank scrolls, small knife, white robe, black cowl, 30' rope

You are not native to this part of the world, coming from eastern lands far away. You worship Shashayu, the eastern god of the forest. Priests of your god have slightly different spheres than priests of Zorakiah. Zorakiah priests have access to the spheres of All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Guardian. Because you do not have access to all those spheres, you are cautious of what spells you cast in other priests' presence. Still, you like to use some of the spells they do not have access to.

You have been masquerading as a priest of Zorakiah for the past six months—at the request of your own temple. The priests there want to learn about other religions, particularly this one, as your high priest does not approve of the way this foreign temple operates.

As a priest of Shashayu you worship all of nature and delight in every blade of grass, every ray of sun, every flower petal, every insect, every animal, everything! You are quick to help those in need, although you must be careful in your approach so you do not give yourself away to the other priests.

Servant Tora

4th level human female priest

STR: 11
INT: 12
WIS: 16
DEX: 17
CON: 17
CHR: 17
AC: 4
Hit Points: 30
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
THAC0: 18

Age: 28
Height: 5' 9"
Weight: 139 lbs

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising (12), reading/writing Common(13), swimming (11), rope use (17)
Magic Items: *Mace +1, bracers of defense AC 7, Heward's handy haversack*
Spells/Day: 5 4
You have access to the following spheres: All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Guardian, and Protection
Equipment: Chain mail, one torch, one flask of oil, two vials of holy water, one water flask, canvas bag, one day's rations, quill, bottle of ink, two blank scrolls, small knife, white robe, black cowl, 30' rope

You believe there is no such thing as "right" or "wrong" outside the framework of societies' established laws and customs. Rights and wrongs are determined by the wealthy and powerful, and by rising in the favor of your deity you hope to become wealthy and powerful. Soon.

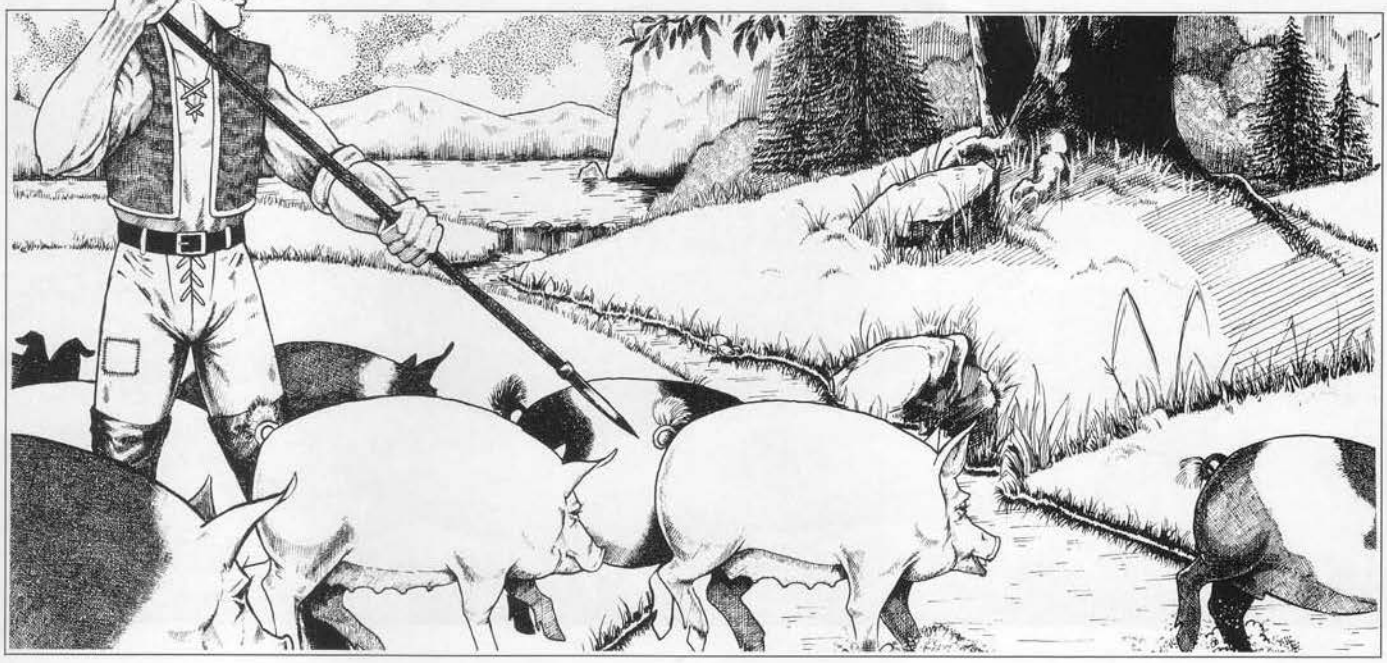
If you had a little more power right now you would be leading this group. You are more capable than Garwood, and you certainly have more abilities than the others in this group. It is difficult to work with lessers. However, the laws and rules of the temple instruct you to work with others, so you will follow the laws and rules to the letter. In fact, you can quote the Laws and Rules almost as well as Straitor.

There is no place in life for spontaneity, informality, or openness—and you try to pontificate on this matter so your beliefs will wear off on others. Of course, your sermons are limited by the vow of silence. The vow you all took is one of the order's most revered oaths. You speak only when allowed—for prayers and during meals.

❑

The Living City

The Swineherd's House



by Terence Kemper

North of Ravens Bluff, not far from where Military Trail forks off to the river, stands Hog Hill. The Hill is named mainly for its porcine occupants, but the moniker derisively includes Swithin Sigirdson, the swineherd, his wife, Harkina, and their family. The couple lives on the edge of poverty on the south side of Hog Hill in a "house" that is part makeshift log cabin and part cave. The "house's" motley appearance does nothing to improve the Sigirdsons' reputation.

In addition to raising pigs, the Sigardsons have a few chickens and goats, and they tend an apple orchard. They spend their winters crafting small wooden knickknacks that son Swen peddles in town.

Hog Hill itself is 120 yards wide and 90 feet high. It is dome-shaped, and a few small springs gush forth from its sides. The north side of the hill is a sheer cliff where the limestone has fallen away into Crystal Spring.

Crystal Spring

On the north side of Hog Hill, is Crystal Spring. The spring is a large, limestone sinkhole 70 yards in diameter. Although the sinkhole is on higher ground that slopes away to the river, one can easily approach its lips on foot from any direction except the cliff directly behind the hill, where there is a sheer drop to the water.

The water in the sinkhole rises and falls with the amount of rain, but it generally lies 20 feet below the sheer drop off of the lip. A scattering of jagged rocks and a few older contoured boulders lie at the foot of the walls, and these are fully exposed when the water level drops.

The walls of the sinkhole have been smoothed and carved into grotesque shapes by aeons of upwelling current, but the water is clear, cold (553F), fresh, and deep. In fact, no one knows the depth of Crystal Spring.

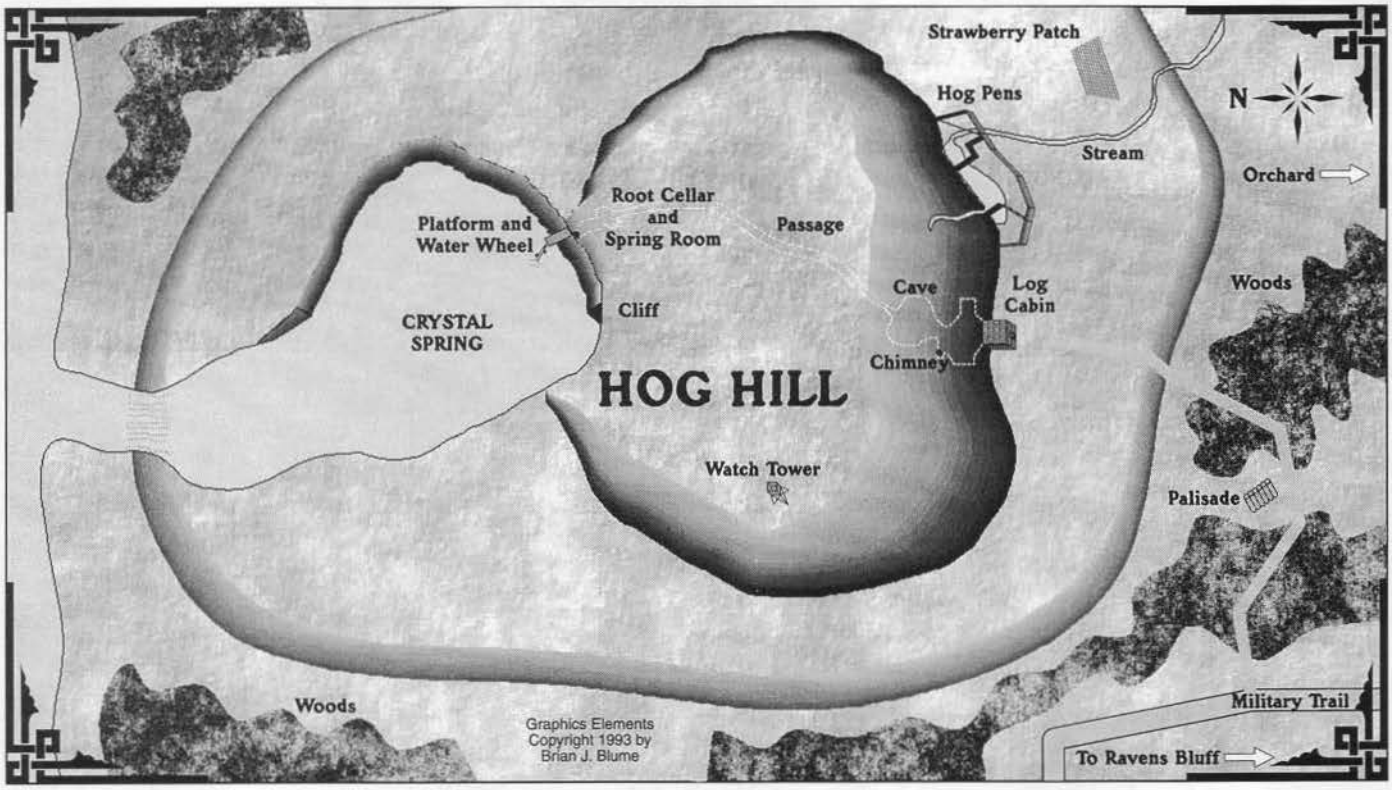
The upwelling waters have long since worn a broad outlet that flows down to the river about half a mile north. The walls of the spring and the hill itself are honeycombed with natural limestone caverns and, in the largest of these, Swithin and Harkina began building their modest home.

The House

Over the years, Swithin has scavenged discarded lumber from old abandoned houses, flotsam from the river, and a few choice logs from the oak forest that is part of his land. This creates a makeshift appearance which Swithin has been slowly upgrading over the years, usually under the impatient lash of Harkina's tongue. The front of the house is the log cabin portion, which is basically one large room roughly 20 feet square, a combination living room/workshop for the odd cottage industries in which the family engages.

There are two huge, rectangular white limestone rocks set upright at each of the two front corners of the house, but the rest of the walls are square-cut logs and chinking. There is a door in the middle of the front wall with a parchment-covered window on each side and a roofed front porch.

The rear of the house is a water-carved cave, part of which is squared off and part of which is a winding, irregular, cylindrical passage varying from 10 to 20 feet wide, with a couple of smaller side passages and alcoves. Here and there are small holes in the ceiling



which blow cooling breezes in the summer and cold drafts in the winter, which Swithin has never quite gotten around to doing anything about. The walls of the cave are white or ivory-colored, and damp to the touch.

All of the furniture in the swineherds' house is homemade, for Swithin has traded hogs and piglets to carpenters for good wood, and sometimes he manages to get four smooth, lathed legs. Some of the chairs have seats and backs made of cow skin from feral cattle that Swithin finds in the woods, or pig-skin cushions stuffed with goose feathers. The beds for the family members are all double bunk beds tucked into wide recesses or alcoves in the cave portion of the house, but there is a sleeping loft for the older boys at one end of the cave chamber.

The fireplace is an oddly-shaped water-carved recess in the wall of the cave chamber, and in the ceiling directly above it is a smooth, funnel-shaped natural chimney that passes through the rock until it comes out 15 feet above in Swithin's smokestack of mortared sticks and stones. The fireplace has the usual hardware, a cast-iron ash shovel, a poker and andirons, and a large leather ash bucket, as well as various pot hangers, pots, and pans dangling from wall hooks nearby. The ashes are not wasted; Harkina uses them to make soap.

The stone floors are covered by sweet-smelling straw mats that Harkina weaves during the winter, or by a few animal skins from game Swithin has shot or trapped in the forest. There's one medium-sized bearskin, two wolf skins, and some fox skins.

At the far rear of the cave is a sloping passage that leads down to the root cellar and the cool spring room, both smaller caves beneath the main house. The root cellar contains baskets of beets, turnips, and apples; and the spring house is where butter, cheese, and preserves are kept in clay jars in the cold waters of the spring.

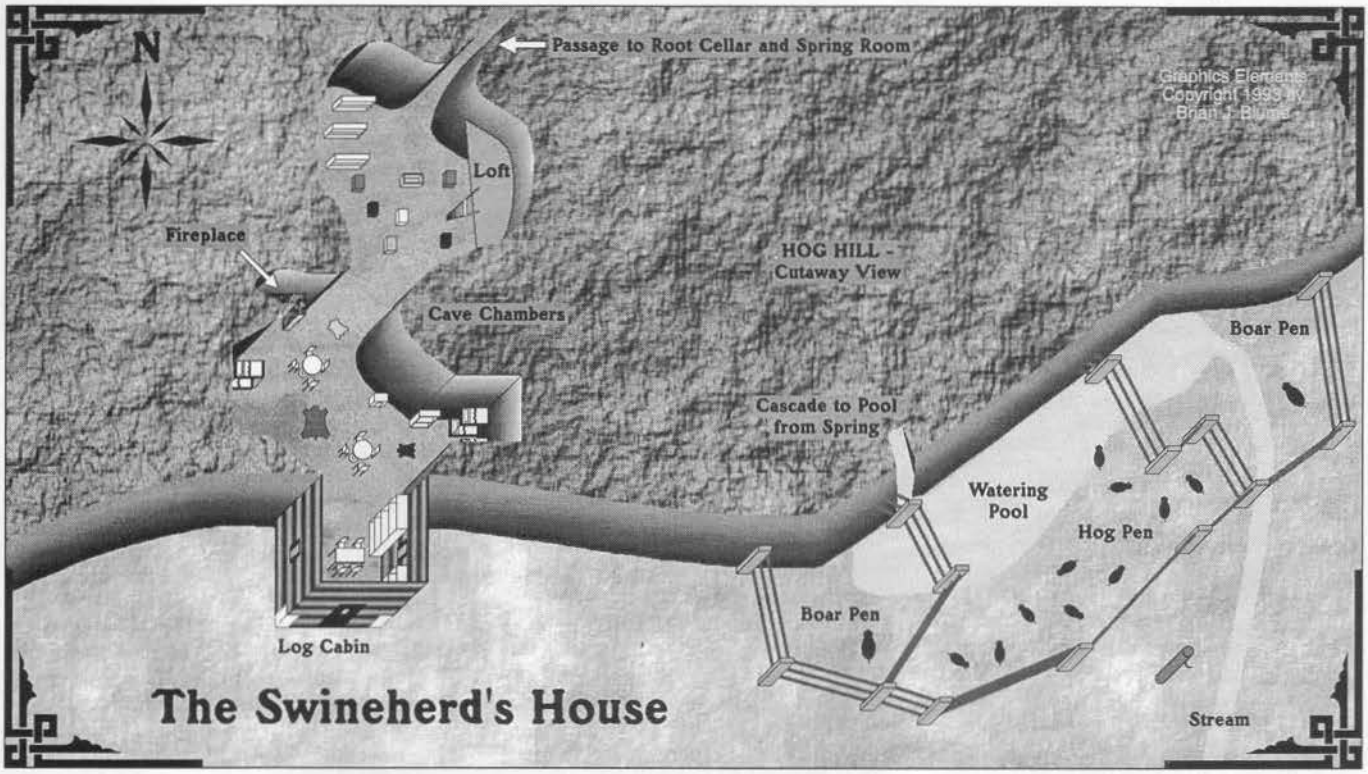
Swithin and Harkina maintain an apple orchard about a hundred yards downhill, fenced off to keep out stray pigs. They also plant strawberries in a cleared patch every spring after the last frost of winter passes.

Once a week during the fall, Swithin and two or three of his sons drive a half dozen hogs to town for market. During the butchering season, Swithin provides at least two fine fat hogs a week to the Two Brothers' Butchery (see POLYHEDRON® Newszine Issue #59) and to Mercer's Meat Market. For this he earns enough money to buy a few extra necessities and perhaps a luxury item or two, such as honey for cakes, a bolt of cloth or strong needles for Harkina, combs or brushes for the girls, knives for the boys, and a new tool or two.

Those who visit the swineherd's house to can purchase some of the food or craft items the family produces. The only list of items and services for sale is an oral one, which all but the youngest family members can recite by heart. All of the food items are cooked by Harkina to the buyer's taste.

Food and Lodging:

Pork, roast, chops, or loin	2 sp
Goat, roast leg or shoulder	2 sp
Chicken, 1/2 roasted	1 sp
Pork, goat, or chicken stew with vegetables (carrots, lentils, peas, parsnips, onions, squash)	3 sp
Wheat bread, loaf	4 cp
Barley bread, loaf	3 cp
Goat's milk, pint	1 cp
Cheese, wedge	5 cp
Garden salad, bowl	1 cp
Butter, half pound	4 cp



Fresh river fish, trout or salmon	1 sp
Mushroom soup	4 cp
Acorn soup	2 cp
Nuts, pound	2 sp
Eggs, two	3 cp
Pancakes, three	2 cp
Preserves, apple, blackberry, strawberry	2 sp
Bacon, sausage, ham	3 sp
Pie, apple, blackberry, strawberry	3 sp
Smoked ham	5 sp
shoulder	3 sp
Lodging, one night	2 sp
Grazing for animals	1 cp

Craft items:

Straw mats (10' x 6')	4 sp
Wooden spoons, bowls, rolling pins, brooms, mortar & pestle	3-4 sp
Whisk brooms, clothes pins, doodads & gewgaws	1-2 sp
Wool sweater	6 sp
Wool cape & hood	5 sp
Wool blanket	5 sp

Nets

Gill (20' x 5')	5 sp
Casting (weighted, 6' round)	3 sp

The Swineherd's Business

Each morning during the summer and fall, Swithin leads his hogs forth at sunrise, carrying his swineherd's crook (a larger version of a shepherd's crook with a wicked spike on the bottom). He wanders through the hills and dales, grazing his swine on the acorn- and mushroom-rich forests along the river to the north. The hogs are quite independent and feed themselves among the trees and bushes, eating even snakes, small birds, and all types of roots, since they are omnivorous. Swithin keeps them more or less in a group and leads them north along the river until he decides he has gone far enough for the day. His main concerns are that no one steals the hogs—and that the hogs get enough to eat. If they are obviously eating well, he returns home before the heat of the afternoon, because hot hogs want just to sleep in the mud. He also makes sure that none of the hogs—especially the piglets—gets lost or attacked by wild animals.

Normally, Swithin returns between noon and mid-afternoon, ready to turn to other labors. He hunts while swineherding, visiting his traps and snares for small game, or spearing a deer or large game bird for dinner.

He does not take the hogs out much once the first snow falls, and he is forced to feed whatever pigs he has not sold or slaughtered in the fall. He sells slaughtered hogs (3 gp each) or piglets (1 gp each) to travelers on the nearby road. Part of the money buys grain, old bread, and kitchen scraps from restaurants (*The Dancing Bear*, for example) to feed his diminished herd during the winter and early spring. He tries to keep only the two boars, the two young boars, and four or five sows over the winter. Naturally, Swithin knows how to call hogs: Sooooeeee, Hog!

The Hog Pens

Swithin's herd of hogs numbers about 20 adult swine, including two adult boars that must be penned separately, for they will fight, and two year-old boars. All other young male pigs are castrated as shoats, which makes them large, fat, and gentle. These and some of the females are the ones he fattens and drives to market when they are a year or two old. There are, of course, a few pet piglets that are given the run of the house and yard.

Handling hogs is dangerous, for they

can give nasty bites or kicks, and the boars are ferocious with their tusks. Swithin wears boiled leather armor (cuir bouilli) leggings and arm protection as well as long leather gloves. Hogs are not sheep.

The hog pens are corrals made of large, rough-hewn limestones cut into tall rectangles with rough-hewn oak fence rails between them. Since the hill rises abruptly behind the hog pens, it forms the fourth side of the pens. There is a small spring-fed pool that runs through all three pens for the hogs to bathe in. Nearby is a stout oak post with a vicious cast-iron hook for hanging slaughtered hogs.

The Family

There are seven children, including 20-year-old Swen, who is a pack-peddlar intent on buying his own mule (or so his parents think), and 19-year-old Hedwig, a blossoming beauty who helps her mother make brooms and tends the chickens and goats, and five younger children, ranging in age all the way down to a wee toddler. As in any farm family, the children have chores, from milking the half-dozen goats, collecting the chickens' eggs from the crevices and crannies of the cave where they roost, to feeding and driving the pigs to and from the forest.

There is a reason that Swithin the Swineherd and Harkina live in near poverty beyond the town walls: there is a family curse upon them—not a magical curse, to be sure, but a curse of lineage. Swithin's father, Sigird, was a notorious robber and ruffian who was sent to prison for 25 years after a criminal cohort turned informant and framed him for the murder of a prominent townsman, Leroy Landsdowne. Sigird was guilty of much, but he did not kill Landsdowne.

Despite their poverty and their shunning by the townsfolk, Swithin and Harkina crave human company and welcome the stories and extra money that boarding travelers from the nearby Military Trail brings. For a very reasonable price, Harkina will wash clothes and provide the travelers with beds and meals. If the travelers lack ready cash, Swithin uses their labor to raise a few more logs in his palisade, chop firewood, or haul chipped rocks from the cave portion of his house.

Swithin the Swineherd (Sigirdson)

3rd Level Human Fighter

STR: 15
DEX: 15
CON: 16
INT: 13
WIS: 10
CHA: 6/12
AC Normal: 8
AC Rear: 9
Hit Points: 18
Alignment: Neutral
Languages: Common
THAC0: 18

Weapon proficiencies: long sword, battle axe, throwing spear, swineherd's crook*

* Many swineherds carry a long staff with a crook at the end, somewhat larger than a shepherd's crook (swine have thicker necks than sheep), some eight feet long with an iron spike about six inches long on the end. It is used for batting acorns down from trees and for prodding recalcitrant swine.

Non-weapon proficiencies: hog-handling (16), rough carpentry (12), spear hunting (12), swimming (11), snare making (13) woods lore (15), knowledge of the Crystal Spring/ Military Trail area (16)

Note that Swithin's charisma is lower around his neighbors, higher outside of town.

Swithin is 37 years old, 6' 4" tall, 185 lean pounds, and has pale blue eyes and straw-colored hair. He has rugged good looks but is a touch lantern-jawed. He's broad shouldered and strong but wiry; there's no hog fat on this man.

Swithin is a proud farmer and is happily married to Harkina (happily when she isn't complaining about the ramshackle house), but he is bothered by his low status and outcast position. He would willingly go adventuring, perhaps with his eldest son and daughter, leaving his wife and capable 17-year-old son to run the farm. Swithin is a restless, sometimes driven man, haunted by the death of his beloved daughter, Sunshine. Though generally kind, Swithin's paranoia and foreboding grief means that he might strike out in blind violence under threatening circumstances.

Swithin knows his father, Sigird, to be innocent of the murder, and he is determined to prove Sigird's innocence. He loves his father but despises Sigird's criminal way of life. He is searching for the hidden cache of his father's ill-gotten gains, partly to hire a lawyer to exonerate Sigird and remove the family "curse" to give his family a better life. Swithin is desperate to find a way to break out of his life of poverty.

Swithin is illiterate, but he is mechanically clever. Industrious and independent, he resents being called a "dumb swineherd" and especially hates being called a "filthy pig" since he is a very clean person (swimming in the spring or river frequently). Even his pigs are cleaner than the average townsperson. He is almost desperate for money and often goes searching through the smaller caves and side tunnels all around the hill and sinkhole for the hidden cache. The land all about is his, a bow shot (80 yards) from the high bank of the sinkhole and the spring, and a narrow strip along both sides of the little trail that leads from his house to Military Trail. He purchased the land with what remained after he went adventuring many years ago. He has a mismatched set of chain mail, greaves, a helmet, a shield, and a pair of swords he keeps cleaned and sharp.

Swithin has devised a sort of water-wheel to bring the sweet water up from the sinkhole behind the house to the level of a wooden platform that juts over the water. This is where Hog Hill drops to the water line in a precipice or cliff, and only a narrow shelf leads to a nearby cave opening that serves as the family's back door. The contraption consists of four large buckets fastened to a long leather belt that passes between two wide wooden pulleys, one of which has a handle. When the handle is turned, the buckets travel up and down, dipping into the water and under, bringing water up and dumping it into a trough on the platform.

Swithin also built a tree-house for his young children in a large, sprawling oak, and the chickens roost on the roof of it at night. He has also constructed a tall watch-tower that he uses to watch the traffic on the main road into town. This is basically a four-posted tower with poles to reinforce it, making giant "Xs" up the sides, narrower at the top than at the bottom, with a platform big enough for two people at the top, some 50 feet up.

Since Swithin has been threatened once or twice by townsfolk who either hate his father or who try to blackmail

him into revealing the hidden cache, he has set a variety of traps along his land on either side of the little trail that leads to Military Trail (actually a road, not a mere trail); the traps include deadfalls; pits with sharpened stakes; flexible branches with knives attached, ready to whip into an unsuspecting enemy; and snares to encircle a trespasser's feet, leaving him or her hanging in mid-air. Swithin is a kind person at heart, but life has been cruel to him and his family. His fear for their safety is utmost in his mind, so he has begun building a palisade, though progress has been slow and fitful.

During the winter, when there is little to do outdoors, Swithin carves wooden spoons, honey-dippers, clothespins, rolling pins, mallets, mortars and pestles, and other useful things of wood, including whimsical doodads, to sell in town. Swithin and Swen also work at enlarging the cave, squaring it off to make it more habitable, and digging post holes for the stakes of the palisade.

Swithin's relations with the townsfolk are precarious; even his wife's relatives treat him coldly. Not all the townsfolk feel this way. For example, the elder dwarven brother of the Two Brothers Butchery, Durto, and his wife, Naia, tolerate Swithin partly for pity and partly because Swithin raises fine, fat, clean hogs. But Durto's younger brother, Norin, shuns Swithin; and the hired man, Edward, occasionally threatens the swineherd Swithin.

Harkina

0 Level Halfling

STR: 9
DEX: 15
CON: 14
INT: 13
WIS: 11
CHA: 15
AC Normal: 10
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 6
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Languages: Halfling, Common, Water Sprite
THAC0: 20

Weapon Proficiencies: fishnet, gaff, trident, fish knife, blowgun
Non-weapon proficiencies: farming, fishing (15),weaving (13), cooking (13),swimming (16)
Magical item: *Pipe of fish summoning.* This closely-guarded family heirloom calls fish and water sprites to the summoner. It is a tapered narwhal horn about eight inches long, covered with carvings of fishes. It produces a low-pitched tone inaudible to human ears, summoning 1-12 fish which will bite virtually any bait or even leap into any net. Harkina wears it on a thong around her neck, using it to summon fish whenever she is having a bad fishing day.

Harkina is a petite 4'4" and 80 pounds, slender but strong. She has sapphire-blue eyes and platinum blond hair. She's the daughter of a halfling couple, a deep-sea fisherman and a farmer's daughter. When she was just a child, she discovered that she was subject to severe sea sickness and could fish only from the land or from a boat in quiet inland waters. She loves rivers and pools passionately, and she picked the sinkhole area as the site for the hog farm. She has a few close friends and relatives in town, but not many. Despite the shunning of her family, she does not want to move away.

Harkina has an even disposition, not nearly as desperate as Swithin, since she has known times of poverty as a fisherman's daughter. She has her pet peeves, about which she is prone to nag. She positively hates the cold winter drafts in the ceiling and pesters Swithin about them with the first cold snap every winter. She also hates dogs, although Swithin would like to get one to help manage the hogs. She is adamant about having no dogs on the property, considering them dirty, constantly hungry, and essentially useless. She considers all dogs flea-bitten biters, and she has refused both Swithin's and the children's pleas to keep this or that stray dog.

Sunshine (Sigfrieda)

The Avenging Spirit of Crystal Spring

Human Form:
STR: 11
DEX: 15
CON: 12
INT: 15
WIS: 11
CHA: 18
AC Normal: 10
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 8
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Halfling, Common, Water Sprite
THAC0: 20

Weapon proficiencies: sling, barbed javelin, casting net
Non-weapon proficiencies: weaving (12), goat handling (15), fishing (12), knowledge of underwater topography of Crystal Springs

In life, Sunshine was the lovely eldest daughter of Swithin and Harkina. She delighted in caring for her small but growing flock of goats, one billy, three nannies, and occasional kids. They roved where the grass was good in the nearby forest and on two or three neighboring hills.

It was on one of these occasions that she was surprised by several town boys who, hating the Sigirdson family and attracted to her beauty, attempted to humiliate Sunshine. Rather than submit to their rude and insulting offenses, Sunshine fled toward her home, only to be surrounded near the high bank of the sinkhole at dusk.

Praying to her patron deity, Ilmater, the Crying God, she threatened to jump if not left alone. The boys grabbed for her, and she was forced to jump, breaking her neck on the rocks below—only inches from the deep water and freedom. Because she was so devoted to Ilmater and had been studying to become a priestess, Ilmater turned Sunshine (whose given name was Sigfrieda, though none called her so except when angry with her) into an avenging spirit. Sunshine will haunt the sinkhole until her tormenters have been punished.

Sunshine, in human form, is 5' 8" and 115 pounds, with clear blue eyes and long blonde hair tumbling past her shoulder blades. Her figure is willowy and her movements graceful, even when she touches the ground (not often). She helps lost strangers, but woe to those with ill intention. Since she was killed near dusk, this is when she is most likely to be seen, especially on the 14th day of each month (the day on which she was killed). Her father, Swithin, often comes to the sinkhole near dusk to catch a fleeting glimpse of her.

Sunshine is the only one beside Sigird who knows where her grandfather's hidden cache is, having spied him placing it when she was shepherding her goats nearby.

Sunshine loved to sing, so her spirit will often be found by the sound of her voice.

Avenging Spirit

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Crystal Springs
FREQUENCY:	unique
ORGANIZATION:	single
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	hour of death (dusk)
INTELLIGENCE:	high
TREASURE:	Z
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Good
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	6, fly 12
HIT DICE:	10
THAC0:	14
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	*confusion, fear*
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	*invisibility*
SIZE:	M (same as human 2 form)
MORALE:	average
XP VALUE:	1,400

Avenging spirits are said to be the souls of murder victims whose assailants went unpunished in life. They are bound to a particular place, generally close to where they died. They may appear as far as a mile or two from the scene of their deaths for brief periods (a few minutes), but they can attack only when within 100 yards of their place of death.

As an avenging spirit, Sunshine's "duties" are two: to protect her family, and to avenge her own death (the town boys are now in their mid-20's). Ilmater has granted Sunshine an array of priest spells. With non-threatening strangers, she is likely to appear as a cascade of blonde hair, a disembodied voice singing sad, sweet songs, or occasionally as a swallow or kid goat. She will tease mortals with *cantrips* and use them with *invisibility, ventriloquism,* or *entangle* to have fun bedeviling them.

Combat: The avenging spirit will kill its enemies to have revenge or to protect its family. Its preferred method of destruction is the waterspout.

The avenging spirit will appear in one or more of her forms to help strangers in need. she will use *ESP* and *detect lie* to determine the alignment and friendliness of any she meets.

Anyone encountering an avenging spirit must make a saving throw vs spell or flee in terror for 2d12 rounds before recovering. There is a 50% chance that a fleeing victim will drop whatever he or she carries.

An avenging spirit is struck only by blessed or magical weapons. A priest may turn an avenging spirit as a specter.

Ecology: Avenging spirits do not eat, drink, nor breathe. They are undead.

Spells: *animal friendship, entangle, speak with animals, heat metal, charm person, continual light, plant growth, detect lie, call woodland creatures, raise/lower water, control winds* (specifically a waterspout, winds 55-72 mph), *magic font, confusion, sunray, stonebirds**

* new spell

Stonebirds: (Alteration)

Level: 3rd
Range: special
Components: V, S
Duration: special
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 2d10 birds
Saving throw: none

When cast, this spell summons 2d10 birds, which are transformed into living stone. The birds are under the control of the caster and retain all of their avian abilities. Each stone bird is treated as a 1 HD creature with a THAC0 of 19. A stone bird has four hit points and inflicts 1d4 points of damage with each successful packing attack.

Stone birds can be directed to fly into a target. If the bird successfully strikes a target, it inflicts 2d8 points of damage and dies.

Birds remain in their stone form for 10 minutes per level of the caster, or until they are killed. At the end of the spell's duration, the birds are no longer under the caster's control.

Sigird

12th Level Human Thief

STR: 14
DEX: 17
CON: 13
INT: 12
WIS: 16
CHA: 6
AC Normal: 8
AC Rear: 9
Hit Points: 44
Alignment: Chaotic neutral
Languages: Common, Halfling, Elven, Thief's Cant

Weapon proficiencies: club, dagger, blackjack, short sword

Non-weapon proficiencies: appraising (15), disguise (18), gaming (16), rope use (15), knowledge of Ravens Bluff underworld and topography of city, read/write Common (16)

Thief's skills: PP 70%, OL 90%, F/RT 50%, MS 60%, HS 55%, DN 80%, CW 95%, RL 60%

Equipment: (identical kits stashed around Ravens Bluff) housebreaker's harness, key making kit, lockpicks
Magical items: *ring of protection +3, boots of elvenkind, mantle of the mundane, two bags of holding* (30 cu. ft. and 250 cu. ft), *oil of rust removal* (for locks, hinges, etc.), *dust of tracelessness*

Horace the Magpie: This is Sigird's long-time pet, a large black and white bird with a long tail (body 20", tail 11"). Horace is unusually intelligent and has the crow's thieving ability, which endears it to Sigird. Sigird has trained Horace to grab various items upon command—gems, rings, bangles, necklaces, keys, brooches, and so forth. Horace can speak a handful of words, none of particular use ("Hello," "goodbye," "Sigird," and his normal 'song,' "queg queg queg . . ."). After searching diligently for Sigird on and off, Horace has found him in his prison cell and visits him daily. There, Sigird has been slowly retraining the bird.

Magpie (1): Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 1, Fl 36 (B); HD 1-2 hp; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SZ M; ML 8; XP 15.

Sigird Sigirdson is a very average looking man, about 5' 9" and 155 pounds. He has dirty-blond hair when it is not dyed for some disguise. He has only two distinguishing characteristics: a very old and hard-to-see four-inch scar down his right calf, and one blue eye and one green eye. He sometimes wears a patch over one eye or the other (he is right-eye dominant, so the patch is usually on the left), but he finds it a nuisance.

Sigird is a master thief, born and raised a thief, and deeply involved in the underworld. Born into great poverty, he learned to pick pockets and steal from the careless at an early age. He no longer remembers his parents, having fled from home at age 10 or so; in fact, he doesn't even know his own age except to say he is older than 50 but no older than 55. He hates authority but mostly enjoys tricking people or taking

advantage of them. He is a ruffian, but no murderer; "There are better ways," he always says.

He desperately wants to get out of prison and does not much care how he does get out: picking locks, bribing a guard, soliciting outside help, etc. He has some idea of using Horace the Magpie to help him escape, but the bird needs extensive training. Once he escapes, there will follow an extensive manhunt, for he is a convicted murderer (albeit a framed convicted murderer), and many people know the tale of his treasure cache.

He stakes his faith on his knowledge of the back alleys, rooftops, cellars, and sewers of Ravens Bluff, believing he could evade the law long enough to escape the city if only he could get out of prison.

Sigird can disguise himself quickly and convincingly with materials as simple as burnt cork or lampblack, flour, chalk, or whatever is at hand. His connections with his own thieves' band, Sigird's Seven (originally seven; now somewhat fewer), and the Beggar King increase his chances of being helped and hidden, at least briefly.

Sigird is five and a half years into a 25-five year prison term for murdering a prominent townsman, Leroy Landsdowne. Sigird has been framed, however, by the Lord Thief-Taker, Anton Paere, who paid an informer to testify against Sigird in a sensational trial. Sigird had been slowly building up his own thieves' band to challenge Anton Paere's network of thieves and informants.

The only reason that Sigird was not executed was that Paere has spared his life in hopes that a long sentence will force Sigird to confess the location of the hidden cache of treasure he has hoarded. A second possibility is that Anton Paere himself intends to help Sigird escape, and through his informants and spies then follow Sigird when he returns to get his hidden cache. Paere would then eliminate Sigird and take the cache for himself.

Sigird's Seven has several places in which they commonly hide their stolen goods. One is in an old grave in the churchyard; another in a cellar in the bad part of town; the third is in an abandoned gate house now half-buried in the new town wall.

The Seven have gone deep underground since Sigird's incarceration and remain loyal to him, plotting for the day when they can spring him and share in the booty. None knows whether there is an informant among the Seven, nor indeed whether Sigird will return to them if he escapes.

Sigird's fence is Misty Morgan, who owns a shop known as *The Moonlight Pawnshop* in the worst section of town. Misty is the sensuous, swarthy, cussing, tough, and clever daughter of a pirate, once the mistress of Lyndon Golight of the Safe Harbor Marine Insurance Company.

Swen Sigirdson

3rd Level Human Bard

STR: 13
DEX: 14
CON: 14
INT: 13
WIS: 8
CHA: 12/15
AC Normal: 7
AC Rear: 8
Hit Points: 23
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Halfling
THAC0: 17

Weapon Proficiencies: crossbow, short sword, staff
Non-weapon proficiencies: acting (14)

appraising (14), bargaining (15), musical instrument (13), read/write Common (8) teamster (13), disguise/makeup (13)

Spells: *cantrip, sleep, taunt*
Bard's skills: PP 24; DN 33; CW 58; RL 20

Swen Sigirdson (pronounced Sven) is a shorter, more muscular version of his father, being 6' 1" and 190 pounds. He looks much like his father, blue-eyed and straw-haired. He does not have his father's lantern jaw, but does have a fine white set of smiling teeth.

Swen was sent out to be a pack-peddlar and a mule-driver in the spring. He planned to save up enough to buy his own horse and a pack mule so he could carry more farther and faster. This goal is still well beyond his present means, since Swen has managed to save only 16 gold pieces so far (he needs over 100).

Swen's hobby has always been entertaining others. He is a beginning mime, and he enjoys acting out humorous scenes from everyday life. He also does excellent silent impersonations of people he has met, usually wagon masters, sergeants of the guard, and customs agents or toll takers. Like many young men, he is uncertain whether he wants to pursue his talent or follow the more conservative career of a merchant. He is learning to play the lute, and sometimes plays the tambourine in a small group of musicians. He will have to make his career choice soon, because music lessons and a finely-crafted lute costs dearly.

On the road, working as a peddlar and mule handler, Swen wears homespun linen shirts, usually yellow, tan, or green, and buckskin trousers, either natural leather or dark green. He has a mime costume that he picked up second-hand. Its leggings are canary yellow on the right, white on the left; the shirt is bright yellow with puffed sleeves and a bright blue waistcoat (vest). He earns enough as a mime to pay room and board at inns along the road. His only magic item is a *pick of strumming* which he found accidentally; he hasn't yet discovered its magical powers.

Swen is friendly, open, honest, and sometimes generous. He works hard at being a pack peddlar and makes a pretty good profit considering his meager capital. He splits his money four ways: some to spend on himself; some for his father (usually half); some to save for a mule or lute (he hasn't decided which yet); and some to buy salt, honey, or cloth wholesale. Swen will sometimes devote his personal spending money to more goods when he thinks he can get a good price.

Unknown to Swen, his father and mother also have been saving coppers and silvers for him to buy a mule. They hope to surprise him by adding their savings to his when he approaches enough money to buy a mule, though they do not know he is considering buying a lute instead.

Swen will gladly serve as a guide to any of the hinterland towns he visits, or as a guide from them back to Ravens Bluff. He will encourage travelers to stay overnight at his parents' house before going to the "big city." Swen will adventure only if he is convinced there is a good chance of gain without much risk. He has little interest in getting himself killed or in following a wild goose chase.

The Adventures

"At last, I have found a way to regain my freedom. Curse the Lord Thief-Taker! it is he who should be jailed for his countless crimes, not I. But soon I shall be free, and I will have his head. Soon I shall escape Blackhall Prison and hide away in one of my cubbyholes. Then I shall slip away to my secret cache at Crystal Spring, grab my loot of gold, rubies, and diamonds—not to forget those magical items! And with my knowledge of disguises and the maze of streets and back alleys that run through the bad part of town, I shall escape Ravens Bluff forever. I shall find my pretty little woman in Wagon Wheel and disappear to start a new life far away. Only a few more minutes until my plan works . . .

Almost any adventure based on the swineherd's house will involve Sigird's secret treasure cache. The PCs can become involved in several ways:

1. The PCs could be hired by the lord Thief Taker to find the escaped Sigird, or they may simply operate as bounty hunters once the thief has escaped.

2. The PCs can work for the Sigirdsons, who wish to recover the loot for themselves, using part of it to hire a good lawyer for Sigird.

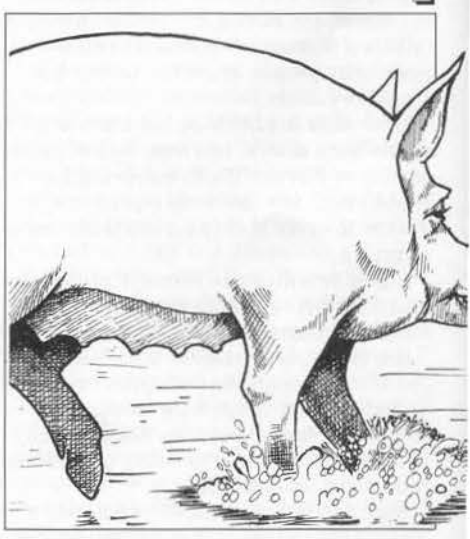
3. The PCs might work for townsfolk who want the treasure for themselves but cannot get past Sigird's traps and other defenses.

4. The PCs can encounter Sunshine, learn that she wishes revenge on the town boys, and deliver them to her. In exchange, she will reveal the location of the cache.

5. Assuming Sigird gets to his cache first, the PCs might need to track him down *after* having experienced one or more of the above scenarios.

These simple ideas can combine to form more complicated adventures. The most elaborate might involve the PCs agreeing to help some of Swithin's greedy neighbors, only to learn that the swineherd's family consists of basically good, honest folk. Then the PCs might change allegiance and help Swithin and family, only to encounter the lord thief taker's men and bounty hunters searching for the escaped Sigird. Eventually the PCs may encounter Sunshine, help her get revenge on the town boys who killed her, then discover the secret cache . . . only to find it empty. Finally the PCs can lead a merry chase through the streets of Ravens Bluff, hoping to catch Sigird before the angry townsfolk, constabulary, bounty hunters, and the lord thief taker catch up with them.

Note that at the end of any recovery of the treasure, both Swithin's family and the city of Ravens Bluff will have claim on part or all of the recovered treasure. The PCs might have to escape to keep much of the treasure, though Swithin may be willing to share the treasure, and the city may provide a finder's fee. ❑



The Living Galaxy

Onions, Plot Trees, And Adventure Chains: Epic Campaigns, Part 3

by Roger E. Moore

In the previous two installments of this column, we looked at the overall themes that long-playing campaigns could have in science fiction games. Here, we look at the nuts and bolts of actually welding a campaign and its adventures together.

Layers of Mystery

It has been remarked, in many other places, that a good mystery should be constructed like an onion. Just as peeling off the skin of an onion reveals a new layer beneath the last, so does detective work to resolve a mystery reveal certain discoveries, which in turn lead to more mysteries and discoveries, and so on. Plots wheel within plots; answers lead to a dozen more questions. Seemingly minor events, chance comments, or worthless items might produce great revelations if carefully examined. At the adventure's end, the Prime Mover of the plot is revealed, and the linkage between all the parts of the grand scheme becomes clear at last.

In my opinion, an epic role playing game campaign should have a strong element of mystery to keep the players intrigued; building your campaign like an onion is thus the best way to go (this point was made in the first installment of this column, in POLYHEDRON® Newszine issue #51). During the course of their normal work, the heroes should turn up a curious little event or thing—a suitcase left behind by a passenger on their starship, for instance, or being hired to deliver a simple message to a minor bureaucrat. Investigating the suitcase or delivering the message leads to complications—the suitcase has, among some common effects, several papers written entirely in code; the bureaucrat appears unusually agitated after receiving the message, and rushes off without comment.

"What's going on here?" should be the question running through the PCs' minds. Their interest has been piqued. The first layer of the onion has been breached, and a new layer appears.

This analogy of onions and science fiction campaigns is appropriate in another way, too. Just as peeling an onion cannot be done without an increasing number of tears, playing through a long campaign cannot be done well without increasingly grave risks to the player characters. As the heroes progress through the long campaign, the dangers they face should grow in number, severity, and type. Threats to life and limb could be joined by threats to financial well-being, reputation, family, country, and sanity; no one and nothing will be safe.

For example, while some of the spacefarers are trying to translate the encoded papers, someone quietly approaches the PCs and asks for the return of the suitcase, claiming to be a relative of the person who left it behind. If the suitcase is returned with the papers, nothing further happens; if the papers are withheld, an attempt is made to break into the PCs' ship while it is grounded, possibly with attacks being made on the PCs themselves. These attacks will obviously appear out of proportion to the relative value of a handful of papers. If the GM wishes to be more subtle but more deadly, a computer virus is inserted into their ship's computer, causing their ship's life support to shut off after the ship has reached planetary orbit. A "rescue" ship will approach the PCs' craft with a boarding crew—but the crew will attack the PCs and attempt to recover the coded material.

In the second campaign noted earlier, one of the PCs sees a news report a few days later that the minor bureaucrat to whom they delivered the message has vanished. Investigation by the PCs reveals that the bureaucrat seems to have left behind his wife, home, and high-paying job, giving no forwarding address. The overworked local police department is of no help. If the PCs pursue the few clues they have (perhaps they are hired by his wife to locate the bureaucrat, if they have good credentials), they might discover that the missing man was a soccer fan, and they might even locate his hovercar by an abandoned soccer field. Sadly, they might also find the man's body—shot multiple times with a laser and stuffed into a trash can. Shortly after this discovery is made public, strangers approach the PCs and identify themselves as government agents. The agents question the PCs deeply, never revealing the reasons for their interest in the slain man. The PCs are released; soon, however, the PCs notice that they are being followed.

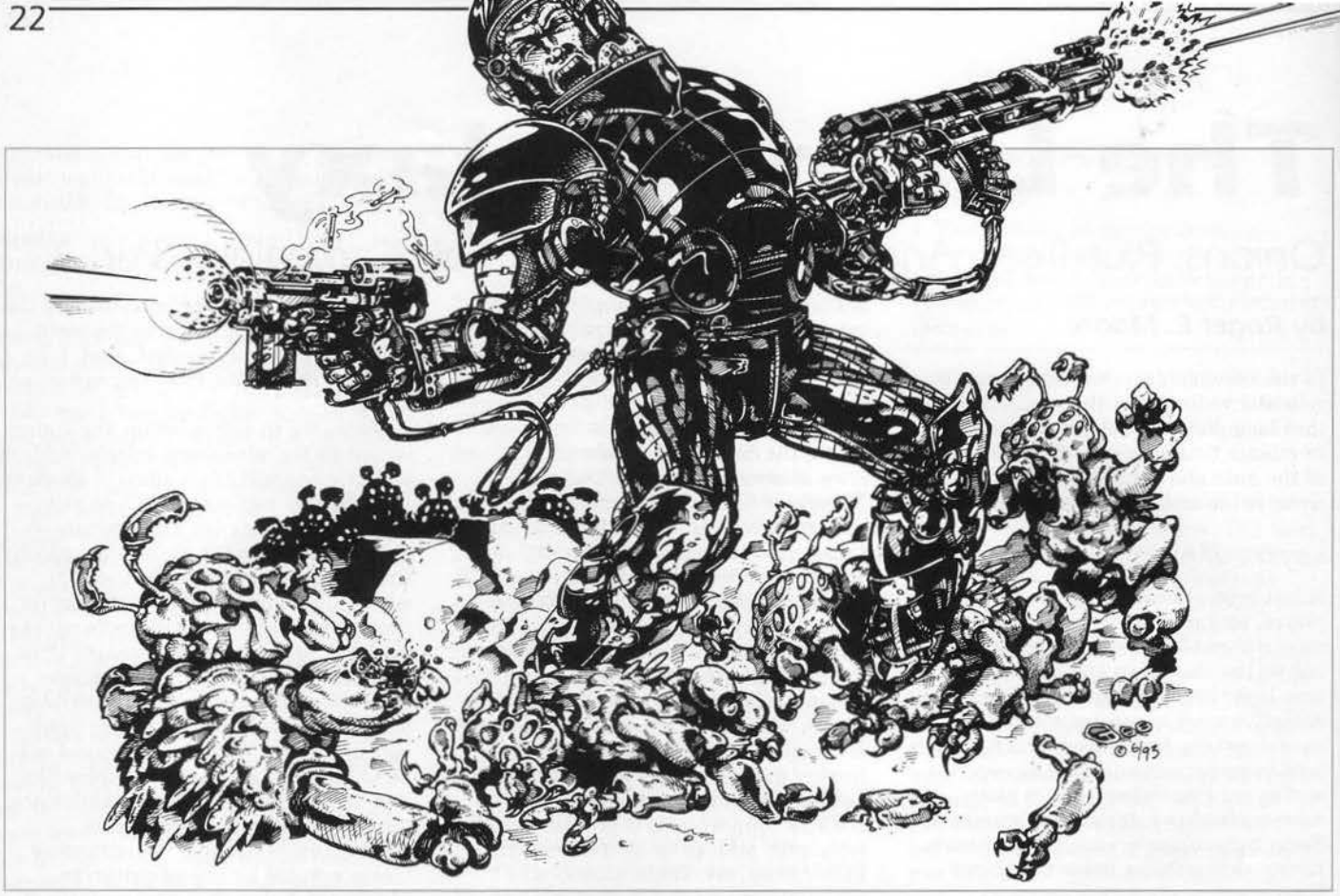
Obviously, in either set-up, the stakes mount as the adventure unfolds. Adding a strong element of paranoia is an excellent idea, by putting the PCs at risk without revealing the exact nature of their pursuers or the reasons for which they are being pursued. As the PCs accumulate information, they discover they've fallen into a much more entangled web and a far deeper danger than they had first thought. Soon, escape from the web may become impossible, and the PCs will have to flee or fight just to survive. Their only way out will be to uncover the root of the opposition and deal with it, whether by diplomacy, gunfire, stealth, or other means.

It also helps to make the adventure more personal for the adventurers. Maybe the bureaucrat was a cousin of one of the PCs, or the suitcase was left behind by a friend who, like the minor bureaucrat, turns up dead. The GM must get the players to *want* to find out what happened; personalizing the nonplayer characters involved works wonders in doing just this.

From the Top Down

Every campaign must have an end; every mystery should have a solution. As you develop a short adventure or long campaign from the bottom up (from the players' viewpoint as their characters take part in the adventure), you should also develop it from the top down (from your own overall perspective as the GM). Keep in mind the end of the quest, the ultimate goals and plans of the prime movers of the situation.

In the first example above, the encoded papers describe a new genetic-engineering technique developed by a private corporation, for a world government involved in a war with a neighboring planet. The technique produces a virus that infects plants, causing them to become poisonous to most animal life. The virus is to be released on the target world by undercover agents, where it will devastate the animal-herding economy and poison innocent civilians. The



papers were left behind by a corporate executive traveling on the PCs' ship; he left the ship to buy some personal items when he suffered a heart attack and died in the town near the starport, leaving his belongings behind (he was heading for the world that had commissioned the technique's development).

The corporation hired a security firm to get the papers back. If the security firm fails or drops the job after too many losses to the PCs, the government that wants that technique will send its own people—and this is a very nasty government, indeed. The PCs cannot make use of the papers even if they are decoded. If the PCs destroy the papers, they still will be hunted until they are captured and killed. If the PCs turn the papers over to the media, the target government, or the like, the outcry will make them heroes and lead to sanctions against both the corporation developing the technique and the nasty government that sponsored the work. The corporation, not a very large one, will collapse. The nasty government, however, will draw up plans to have the whole group assassinated at some appropriate future time.

This adventure is a sort of MacGuffin Hunt in which the PCs have the MacGuffin right from the start and have to get rid of it in the best way possible. It forms a part of a larger campaign, however, in the continuing battle between the PCs and certain elements of the nasty government, which in time may have to be faced down by the PCs for the sake of their own survival. Numerous future adventures may be spawned as the government's vengeful elements go after the PCs, with the climax of the epic coming when the PCs try to bring about in the downfall of those officials who are directing their persecution—a commando strike against the compound where those government officials work, for instance, or offering support for an opposition group on that world. The GM could conclude the campaign by having a change in government occur (the old order was falling out of favor with the masses, anyway), with no further interest being displayed in the PCs by the new politicians. Still, the PCs would be wise to never set foot on that planet again!

You can see how different the topdown view is from the bottom-up view. The GM knows everything, but can parcel out the information only a bit at a time. The players know only a little, but they learn more as the campaign progresses. You also see how a simple event leads to a complicated adventure, which in turn leads to more adventures under the same theme (it becomes a war of survival for the PCs), which leads to a final climax and resolution, clearing the way for a new campaign.

The initial complex adventure with the MacGuffin could be modified to become the core of the campaign itself. In this case, acquiring the papers would be turned into its own series of adventures; the PCs won't just happen to get the papers right off the bat. If the encoded papers have a broad application (say, they provide a formula for breaking the codes used by a hostile interstellar government—a concept borrowed from the recent spy movie *Sneakers*), then the PCs could be stuck with material that would be fought over by every government. What are they going to do?

Another series of adventures could be set up in which other forces try to gain possession of the papers, or the PCs use the papers to decode government transmissions. Perhaps, as happens at the end of *Sneakers*, the PCs use the papers to fiddle with enemy government files or plans, particularly if the government is hostile to the PCs. The PCs might

then fall into a sort of Robin Hood campaign, acting as merry commandos who cause trouble for the government at every turn. The end of the campaign would be the downfall of the enemy government, resulting in no small part (though not entirely) from the efforts of the PCs.

As for the adventure with the soccer-fan bureaucrat—we'll leave that one up to you to tinker with.

Growing the Plot Tree

In the previous two sections, another constructive tip on building campaigns becomes obvious: the plot tree. The PCs, like characters in any good novel, make choices that affect their immediate and long-term futures. Each choice has its own consequences and complications. If you sketch out the plot of a role playing adventure, you'll come to those choice points, and the plot line will branch out, with each separate branch developing its own branches, and so on. Eventually, the once-straight plot line resembles a tree—hence the name "plot tree." The more choices there are for PC actions, the "bushier" the plot tree will get.

A plot tree for a campaign should not be a hard-and-fast thing. PCs might decide to pursue an adventure along an entirely different route than the GM had thought they'd take. Still, players can be fairly predictable, even if the ultimate outcome of the adventure is uncertain. If the GM has a general outline of the events he anticipates will happen, along with some general choice points, he can govern the game much more effectively.

When sketching out the plot for a campaign, avoid turning many of the branches into dead ends. False leads, killer traps, and so forth are discouraging to the players (see the notes on red herrings in this column in POLYHEDRON Newszine issue #83). If the PCs get to a point where they can go one way or the other in their investigations, have each way provide clues that can be followed up, with some clues unique to each path. If you do this, avoid always penalizing the party for splitting up to gain more information or to resolve simultaneous problems.

I would also keep the plot tree relatively "thin" or linear, with choice points eventually funneling back into the main plot line. This keeps the campaign from wandering excessively. For example, the PCs might split up to explore both an abandoned military base and a megacorporation's computer files in search of information on a missing starship. Each place has lots of clues that independently point to a third location, a deep-space complex where the ship was last seen. This keeps the plot on a fairly linear path. (The PCs, if they are smart, will have arranged to get together to compare notes before going on to the next location, automatically funneling themselves back into a linear plot.) If the plot is interrupted by an important short-term quest (e.g., one of the PCs is kidnapped), the main campaign can be set aside until the problem is resolved.

As you sketch the plot tree, also mark down where the important pieces of the puzzle can be found: the people, places, things, and events that are needed to resolve the whole campaign. It does no good to build a campaign around the recovery of a lost fortune in gems, but neglect to give information to the PCs on how to find the treasure, deactivate its guardians, and so forth. Detective stories fail miserably if the author forgets to mention the clues.

Also note places where the campaign can stop for a while if the players want to rest and do something else. A break always helps refresh the players when they return to the main mission. This is best done when a particular adventure within the whole campaign has been completed, and the PCs are assumed to have time to rest and recover themselves. Don't forget to pencil in spots where new player characters can appear and old ones disappear.

To get an exciting plot, add lots of exciting material. Brainstorm for a while to come up with a list of everything you want to put into your campaign—all the adventures, settings, characters, monsters, events, and rewards that you'd like to have present. Never settle for something dull when something wild can fit instead. This point is expanded upon in Russell Droullard's "A Recipe For Espionage," an article that appeared in DRAGON® Magazine (issue #114, October 1986). Though the article was directed toward spy role playing games, it has amazing applications in science fiction campaigns, too.

Finally, look over the plot tree for loose ends. Most of the minor ones and all of the major ones should be tied up and finished in the main part of the adventure. Others, however, can serve as jump-off points to new adventures. For instance, the recovery of a lost artifact from enemy hands might lead to a world war. During the course of that war, the PCs might uncover evidence of a criminal empire's plot to gain control of their world. Wiping out the criminals might lead to a search for their hidden wealth. A surviving criminal might gather an army to attack the PCs. You get the idea.

Adventure Chains

An interesting discussion has been going on in the letters and editorial pages of DUNGEON® Adventures, regarding ways to link ready-made, separate, stand-alone adventures together into a whole campaign. Readers should consult DUNGEON Adventures issues #34 (page 7), #39 (page 2), #40 (page 7), #41 (pages 7 and 9), and #42 (page 7) for details. If fantasy-game GMs can do this, you bet that science fiction game GMs can, too.

In many cases, the techniques for chaining adventures can be used without bothering to set up a whole campaign. The heroes simply move from quest to quest, worrying about nothing more than their swelling bank accounts. There's nothing wrong with this at all, and groups unable to meet very often or that have great changes in membership would do best to skip prolonged campaigns. If you want something more than this, however, you will have to work for it.

In developing an adventure chain for a campaign, have your campaign concept clearly in mind. If you're using published adventures, select one that has important goals, is reasonably complex, and requires a fair amount of travel across a world or space. Resolving this major adventure will conclude the campaign. As you read the module and get a feel for its plot and possible branches, keep beside you a list of all the available adventures for your game system, and make notes on ways to work them into the main adventure picture. Most missions in the chain should be elements required to complete the overall campaign.

Some side adventures might be unrelated to the main campaign but should not draw the players away from their central mission for long; the focus must be kept on the campaign. You should, of course, feel free to borrow adventures, settings, NPCs, items, and whatnot from adventures for other games.

Linking separate adventures on a single world or within a limited inter-

stellar neighborhood can be done in a number of ways:

•Place a map, notes, or clues leading to adventure setting B somewhere in setting A. This allows a more thoughtful entry into the next adventure, without forcing immediate action on the PCs. News reports, hidden codes, overheard conversations, clandestine radio messages, ancient rock carvings, dropped notepads, stolen microfilm, and the like are excellent means of transmitting hints of future missions that the GM has prepared and waiting.

The PCs need not always follow up immediately on the news of the other adventure, and two or more new adventures may be set up in this manner to give the players a choice about their heroes' future plans. One advantage to having other choices for adventures is that the players, if their PCs are stalled in their progress on one quest, might take up another quest for the sake of a break.

Examples: A logbook aboard a derelict space cruiser mentions some ancient ruins sighted on an airless moon in another star system. Photographs taken by a damaged recon satellite recovered by the PCs show an unusual military base being built on a colony world. The skeleton of a long-lost explorer found deep inside a dungeonlike tomb has a map case containing a crude diagram of an overgrown city, rumored to be filled with treasure and valuable artifacts. A fragment of a long riddle in a children's library book, found among the effects of a captured spy, reopens an old mystery about a fabled space pirate. An NPC mercenary hired to complete a mission with the PCs complains about the troubles his family back home is having with roving gangs of looters and thugs. The adventurers, on their way to look for a missing heir, accidentally intercept a secret message meant for a diplomat about a planned hostage seizure or kidnapping. A challenge is overheard in a bar, while the PCs are in disguise awaiting a contact, for daring drivers to enter a dangerous all-terrain vehicle race only a month away.

• Have the patron who hired the PCs to complete one task produce another once the first mission is finished. A happy patron might provide extra equipment and pay; an unhappy one might force the PCs into another mission to make up for the first.

Examples: A corporation pleased with the PCs' rescue of their CEO from a terrorist camp might ask the PCs to safeguard a valuable shipment of papers and materials to a colony world. Miners helped by the PCs' discovery of a long-lost asteroid lode might ask the heroes to accompany them to the system capital, where the miners plan to stake their claims but need protection from the corrupt government troops. The PCs, as space marines, no sooner return from capturing a smuggling ring than their orbital headquarters is surrounded by enemy spacecraft, the pilots of which demand the release of the criminals (the PCs, of course, are ordered to break the siege and destroy the spacecraft). An intelligence-gathering service to which all the PCs belong might transfer them to a hostile post as punishment for blowing their last mission.

• Arrange for adventure B to be inadvertently found by its proximity to the location of adventure A, or have it lie along a route taken by the PCs to get to adventure A. Sometimes, the PCs have little time to prepare before a resolution of the second adventure becomes imperative. The PCs must act often quickly, particularly when they get an urgent call for help, but the GM should insure that "interrupting adventures" are kept short to avoid distracting the PCs too greatly from the main mission.

Examples: An abandoned mine might be discovered by PCs fighting a guerilla war in hill country, and they might use it for shelter before discovering a wrecked aircar, a missing fortune, and an alien monster inside it. An injured alien family being chased by xenophobic settlers might run into the PCs' wilderness camp at night, begging for help. A small town terrorized by bandits in league with the mayor might lie between the PCs and the location of a crashed ship they're searching for. A mad psionic thief might steal an item from the PCs on a crowded subway, leading to a merry chase (with lots of special effects) that makes them late for an important meeting with their patron during another mission.

• Have a villain or criminal group that escaped retribution in adventure A set up a chain of events leading to the appearance of adventure B. James Bond was unable to completely destroy SPECTRE or SMERSH in the Ian Fleming novels, and constantly fought their agents, who set up new plans or attempted to kill Bond. Sauron returned time and again to seize control of Middle-earth, only to be defeated. Darth Vader . . . well, you know about him.

Examples: An organized crime boss might have lost some men, money, and material to the PCs on their last crime-busting spree, and after losing still more thanks to the PCs' work (across a few minor adventures) might decide to have them eliminated in a permanent fashion—after suitable torture and imprisonment in a death trap. A minor military officer whose force lost to the PCs might remember them years later when he himself has gained great political and military power (remember that Hitler was once a corporal). A terrorist group whose plans were foiled by quick thinking PCs might take steps to punish them for their interference (think about the movie *Patriot Games* here). The secret police of a repressive nation could start a file on the PCs after they've caused some trouble on that world, and might spy on them in an effort to extort money from them or manipulate them on their future adventures. The relatives of a criminal captured by the PCs could set up an elaborate scheme to kidnap, kill, or steal from them, or might even arrange for the PCs to unknowingly contribute to the release of the felon from prison.

Once the adventures are linked, simply play them through, building the suspense for the final adventure and the campaign climax. You may wish to alter various parts of the component adventures to link them more closely together, having them share the same NPCs, settings, and so forth when possible.

If any readers have used the adventure-chain technique in their games, I'd like to hear about it. Write to me, in care of this Newszine.

My thanks go out to Wolfgang Baur and Barbara Young, who got the adventure-chain concept off and running in DUNGEON Adventures. I must also thank the brilliant designers of Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game and modules, and the TSR Books department, for which I once wrote a number of ENDLESS QUEST® pick-a-path books; from these two sources I learned a *lot* about plot trees and adventure staging.

❑

Into The Dark

When Good Toys Go Bad

by James Lowder

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

Child's Play

1988, 88 Minutes
MCA/UA
Director: Tom Holland
Cast: Alex Vincent, Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon
****

Killer toys, especially monstrous dolls, are quite common in Hollywood horror flicks. Recently, the growth and refinement of on-screen animatronic effects have made "toys gone bad" stories all the more appealing to filmmakers. *Child's Play* took full advantage of these in SFX to create a violent and expressive little terror named Chucky.

When Chicago police detective Mike Norris (Chris Sarandon) corners wounded serial strangler Charles Lee Ray in a toy store, he never expects the guy to use magic to escape. But the killer does just that, calling upon the dark powers to transfer his soul from his bullet-riddled body into the shell of a smiling, jumpsuited "Good Guy" doll.

Cut to beleaguered single mom (Catherine Hicks), whose terminally cute six-year-old (Alex Vincent) wants a Good Guy doll more than anything. She buys the last doll in the city from a guy in an alley. Yup, she gets the Good Guy with the surprise inside. And now that Chucky has a place to sleep at night, he seeks revenge against his traitorous partner-in-crime, as well as Detective Norris.

Child's Play hits many of the familiar toys-gone-bad cliches—the doll that suddenly appears where it shouldn't, the kid's whiny protests about not moving the toy, and so on. You'll find nothing very surprising, right down to the final confrontation, wherein the heroes have to kill Chucky at least three times before the credits finally roll.

Still, director Tom Holland manages to forge all these familiar elements into an entertaining hour-and-a-half film. The cast certainly helps, with great performances by Sarandon, Hicks, and even Alex Vincent, who is cute without being totally cloying. Another bonus is the script; as with the other successful Holland-Sarandon collaboration, *Fright Night*, the characters react to the supernatural believably, with sarcastic disbelief. And then there's Chucky himself, a chilling marvel of electronic puppetry.

A string of sequels to *Child's Play* followed. Without Holland and most of the original cast, these dull flicks drowned in their own stupidity.

Toys

1992, 122 Minutes
20th Century Fox
Director: Barry Levinson
Cast: Robin Williams, Michael Gambon, LL Cool J, Joan Cusack
****1/2**

The box office failure of *Toys* proved something of a surprise, considering director Levinson's track record—which includes *The Natural*, *Rain Man*, and his previous collaboration with Williams, *Good Morning, Vietnam*.

You have to give *Toys* high marks for creative vision, but that same vision—seen in the brilliant set design, costuming, and choreography—overwhelms the simplistic, morality play storyline. As Leslie Zevo, Williams is the childlike heir to the Zevo toy empire. But when the Zevo patriarch dies, he hands control of the business to Leslie's uncle, the brash and amoral General Zevo. The once-happy toy factory becomes a dreary place with its own military police to control the workers. Worse, the general insists that the company begin churning out war toys.

With the help of various allies, Leslie fights to regain control of the factory and foils his uncle's nefarious plot, which involves a lot more than plastic guns and battle-oriented video games.

I especially liked Joan Cusack's portrayal of Leslie's daffy sister, Alsatia, and rapper LL Cool J's work as Leslie's cousin, the head of the evil security commandos. Even the soundtrack scores high marks, with tracks from Thomas Dolby, Tori Amos, and Enya. But none of that can compensate for the bloated story and heavy-handed moralizing.

You'll likely feel more warmly toward *Toys* if you watch it in half-hour blocks. That way you can admire the pretty pictures, then shut it off and watch something far more entertaining.

Demonic Toys

1991, 86 Minutes
Full Moon/Paramount
Director: Peter Manoogian
Cast: Tracy Scoggins, Bentley Mitchum, Michael Russo
1/2

Dreadful, insulting crap.

OK, I knew not to expect Kurosawa here. After all, Full Moon isn't known for releasing art films. But Los Bros. Band can churn out minimally passable exploitation fare with the best of them. *Doctor Mordrid*, reviewed back in issue #82, is actually entertaining.

And then there's *Demonic Toys*.

While running from the police, a thug hides in a toy warehouse and bleeds on just the right place to reawaken a demon. The demon animates some toys and traps a female cop, the thug's partner, and a couple other low-lifes in the warehouse. The expected mayhem results, with the demon eventually trying to gain control of the cop's unborn kid.

Teddy bears get blasted by shotguns, dopey supporting characters are mowed down, and director Manoogian hits just about every hackneyed toys-gone-bad cliche in the Full Moon "Puppetmaster" handbook. The special effects are of the badly manipulated handpuppet variety, and the scripter's idea of wit is a possessed baby doll that swears like a longshoreman.

Full Moon has already resurrected the Demonic Toys as baddies for two of their other franchises—the Dollman and Puppetmaster series. The only way to stop this madness is to refuse to rent these Demonic Toy-infested flicks and leave them to gather dust in the Blockbusters of America. Please, stop Full Moon before they film again!

❑

With Great Power

Constructing Random Adventures

by Dale A. Donovan

There comes a time in every campaign, super-hero game or otherwise, when the GM runs out of ideas. Maybe she is tired, sick, or just doesn't have an adventure ready when the players unexpectedly descend, saying, "Well, we thought that since we were all here anyway, you could run *something*."

This column should aid those beleaguered super-hero game masters who need an adventure, and need one fast. Below are several tables to help a GM get his creative juices flowing. A GM can roll the appropriate dice for one or more of the tables and run with the results. Or, a GM can simply scan the charts until she finds an element that she likes and that fits her campaign.

In either case, the GM still has work to do. The chart results are merely the barest bones of an adventure. The GM needs to flesh out the ideas listed below with NPCs, settings, role-playing opportunities, and villains. Not every idea below will work in every campaign. Pick and choose. If the GM rolls a result that doesn't seem to fit into the current campaign, ignore it and reroll.

Adventure Starters

Adventure starters, or "hooks," are what gets the characters involved in an adventure in the first place. Good hooks lure the PCs into the main plot of your adventure. Roll 1d20 or choose an appropriate hook.

1. "My hero!" Someone is in love with a PC. This sort of role-playing experience is best run with an NPC, but can be run between two amenable players and their PCs. In any case, a hero is the target of someone's affections. The person offering these feelings could be a hero-groupie, a young person infatuated with the hero who saved his or her life, or this could be true love—real *Romeo and Juliet* stuff. What, if anything, the PC does about this is left to the player, but one must always tread carefully around matters of the heart. (True heroes are not defined by their powers, but by the manner in which they treat others.) This scenario can be played for humor as the PC's pursuer is constantly showing up at the wrong time (in the middle of battles, etc.), or this can lead to a serious romance if the player agrees. Look to the comics for suitable romantic possibilities. Also, see DRAGON® Magazine issue #161's Editorial by Roger E. Moore and the article, "Romance and Adventure!" by Tom Schlosser, for more in-depth tips on running romances in role-playing games.

2. A challenge. The PCs receive a public challenge to meet a foe or foes in combat. The foes could be the PCs' archenemies, or they could be completely unknown to the heroes. The PCs must decide whether to walk into what is almost certainly a trap or risk losing face in the public's eyes. Few heroes enjoy being labeled cowards by the general public.

3. A dying messenger. At a public appearance, someone rushes up to the heroes, utters a few cryptic words, hands them a clue, and dies. This most commonly occurs when the heroes are in costume, but having it happen while they are in their civilian identities is a good twist. Did the messenger just happen to die at the heroes' feet? Or did he somehow know who the PCs really were? The PCs have a lot of questions to get them started.

4. The enigma. The enigma can be anything—a name, an item, or an NPC. Whatever it is in your campaign, the enigma keeps popping up in the heroes' lives. Perhaps the enigma is someone or something the heroes encountered in the past, but did not defeat, solve, recover, etc. In any case, the enigma is back now. If the PCs don't pick up on it immediately, file the enigma away and pull it out again another time you need a hook.

5. New evidence. Some element from one of the PCs' past cases surfaces anew. Perhaps some piece of evidence is uncovered, or a new witness comes forward with heretofore unknown information. However this comes about, this new evidence sheds some doubt on the conclusions the heroes previously reached. Maybe the person they helped send to prison really *was* framed. Suppose that "reformed" super villain *was* lying, after all. It now falls to the PCs to admit they may have made a mistake and investigate the case again.

6. NPC in peril. A highly distressed NPC friend of the heroes calls or visits the PCs. The NPC begs the heroes for their help with some crisis. Perhaps the NPC is gravely ill and needs a rare medicinal herb to live. Maybe a loved one of the NPC is missing or has been kidnapped. Whatever the circumstances, only the heroes can help.

7. Extortion. Someone has something on one or more of the PC heroes and intends to use the PCs do his dirty work for him. The government could discover that illegal break-in the heroes committed last year while in pursuit of their nemesis. Perhaps some villain has learned the heroes' secret identities. Whatever it may be, the extorter wants something from the heroes in exchange for not disclosing the information that would ruin the PCs' lives. One old variant of this trick is to poison the heroes, and tell them they have 24 hours to live. The antidote will be given to them *after* they perform a service, likely one they'd never consider otherwise.

8. Heroes for hire. Some legitimate force or agency wants to hire the PCs for short-term service. Most heroes aren't desperate for work, so some other motivation is needed. Perhaps a charitable or public organization requests the heroes' presence (and abilities). This request could take the form of appearing on a telethon and doing super-powered "tricks" to solicit donations, helping beached whales back into the ocean, guarding important foreign dignitaries (who just *love* American heroes), or acting as the Grand Marshals of a local parade. Do the heroes accept and possibly endanger innocent people (if, for example, an old villain attacks them during the function), or do they appear as complete cads by turning down the request?

9. Impostors. The PC heroes are being impersonated. The impostors are robbing banks, destroying bridges, and generally ruining the heroes' good names. How do the heroes react? Do they deny the charges despite dozens of eyewitnesses? How does the public react? How do the local law-enforcement authorities react? How do any NPC heroes react?

10. Emergency! There is an emergency or disaster and the heroes are needed to help. Only they can get a critically ill child to the one hospital in the world that can save her in time. A high-rise building is on fire, and the heroes must help the fire-fighters battle the blaze and rescue the occupants. There could some environmental disaster (flash flood, oil spill, tornado, forest fire, etc.) that the heroes could help to prevent the spread of or aid in the rescue and recovery efforts.

11. Visitors. The PC heroes must react when they discover a group of extraterrestrials is in their city, perhaps even landing in a local park. The PCs must determine the aliens' motive for coming here. Are the aliens extending the hand of galactic friendship? Did they just get lost? Or are they the advance force for an invading alien army? The heroes must also keep the public and the authorities calm while the aliens are investigated. Some members of society or the government would be afraid of the aliens regardless of their motives, and might well advocate arresting or destroying the aliens and their equipment. Others, including super-villains, might want to take advantage of the aliens and use them and their high technology against mankind (not to mention the heroes.)

12. Coercion. The heroes encounter a new villain. He could be a normal person who is caught stealing or embezzling money (perhaps from the PCs), a new super-powered menace, or an NPC hero gone rogue. It is not that simple, however. The NPC is being forced to act in a villainous manner. Perhaps the NPC's spouse needs expensive medical treatment that insurance won't cover, or the NPC's children have been kidnapped by a third party and are demanding the services of the NPC as a condition of the children's release. In any case, the NPC feels she *must* commit these acts to achieve a greater good. If your heroes are fond of punching first and asking questions later, they'll miss the true villain of the scenario, put a person who isn't evil (at least not yet) in jail, and fail to right a great wrong.

13. Bomb! The PC heroes discover a bomb; perhaps it's in their HQ, in one of their homes, or in a building with hundreds of innocent NPCs. Wherever it is, the heroes need to secure the area, and either remove or defuse the bomb. For people with superpowers, this may not seem difficult—but the bomb could be booby-trapped to prevent tampering, and the PCs have only a limited period of time before it goes off, taking a large portion of the city with it.

14. "Up, up, and . . . hey!" For some reason unknown to the heroes, their powers become erratic, deteriorating until they disappear completely. The GM must come up with a suitable reason to do this (exposure to radioactivity or toxic waste in some past case, a new scheme of their nemesis, etc.). Test the heroes' mettle with this; see what kind of heroes they are when they don't have super powers to fall back on.

15. Monster! A huge beast, many stories tall, is loose in the city. The Army can't stop it—the beast steps on tanks like we step on bugs. Only the PC heroes have a chance of ending this monster's destructive rampage. This hook is borrowed from the "guys-in-rubber-suits" school of Japanese movies. If you've ever seen a Godzilla, Gamera, or King Kong film, you know how a scenario of this type should go. This is especially fun if a PC hero has some growing power and can attempt to go toe-to-toe with the beast. See *The MARVEL®-Phile* in DRAGON® Magazine issues #186 and #198 for collections of some of Marvel Comics' most fearsome monsters of the 1950s and '60s.

These two columns were penned by none other than POLYHEDRON's own movie critic, Jim "Latislav" Lowder.

16. Missing hero. This starter works best when one of the PC heroes can't make it to a gaming session, but it can work with an NPC hero as well. A hero has gone missing, and no one knows where he went. He could be off on a solo mission, tracking a villain, being held prisoner, or lying in an alley, wounded and dying from some villain's sneak attack. In any case, his life could depend on the PCs finding him in time.

17. Ambush! This hook is pretty straightforward. A villain or villains have set a trap for the heroes. Spring this on the PCs when they're vulnerable—set this up to take place just after the climactic battle from the campaign's last session. Just when the heroes are expecting a well-deserved rest (and are low on powers, weapons, hit points, etc.), somebody else shows up wanting to hand the heroes' heads to them. Do the heroes stay to defeat this new threat? Or do they run and live to fight another day?

18. Traitor. One of the heroes' trusted NPC allies turns out to be an infiltrator. He betrays the heroes in some way: setting a trap for them, revealing their secret identities to the public or villains, stealing high-tech gadgets from their HQ, etc. The heroes must identify the traitor, bring him to justice, and find out why he did it in the first place. This could be linked to the Coercion hook above.

19. Attacked! The PC heroes' city, world, or dimension is being attacked, and the heroes are recruited to fight on the front lines. The attackers could be villains out to destroy the PCs' city, or the attackers could come from space, from beneath the sea or deep underground, from another dimension, or simply from a neighboring nation. The PC heroes must determine the attackers' motives and stop them, while trying to prevent too much damage to their city and protecting the city's citizens from falling buildings, fires, etc.

20. Manipulation. Every hero (and each hero's player) has particular beliefs and emotions. Play on these to motivate the heroes into action. Perhaps one of the PCs is wilderness-oriented or just loves to go camping. Have that PC discover a large corporation is illegally dumping toxic waste in the hero's favorite campsite. Or, one of the heroes is a mutant, and a wave of anti-mutant hysteria is building in the press. What does the hero do about it? Does she ignore it, hoping it will soon pass? Or does she take steps like exposing the dumping ground to the press or working to actively promote mutants and deride the anti-mutant views as bigoted propaganda?

Complications

Imaginative GMs can make use of the same basic plot several times by adding twists, conditions, or dilemmas to the central story line. Add these plot twists to your own adventure ideas or combine with appropriate adventure starters from the chart above. Roll 1d10 for a random complication.

1. Deadline. Whatever the heroes' mission is, they must perform it under a time limit. There's only so much time for the PCs to regain control of the experimental laser-defense satellite before the villains who've taken it over can bring its weapons' systems online—allowing the villains to hold the Earth for ransom under the threat of the satellite's energy weapons, not mention blowing the heroes out of orbit.

2. Transformed. The newest foes of the PC heroes turn out to be innocent NPCs who've been transformed into evil-doers (monsters such as werewolves, de-evolved apes, etc.). How and why is up to the GM. How will the heroes defeat the next batch of these beings without injuring the innocent people the monsters really are?

3. Mind-switches. Some force to be determined by the GM has switched the minds and personalities of the heroes. The PCs' minds could be switched just amongst themselves (The Mole learning to use Captain Victory's super strength and flight power), the heroes could find themselves in the bodies of normal NPCs, or in the bodies of their arch-enemies. Remember whichever bodies the heroes find themselves in, somebody else is running around in the heroes' bodies—with their super powers.

4. Immunity. The PC heroes have got the bad guys right where they want them, but for some reason, they can't bring the fiends to justice. Perhaps the villain's secret identity has diplomatic immunity, or a legal loophole allows the villains' release mere hours after the heroes' valiant actions to capture them. How do the heroes deal with this frustrating setback?

5. Wanted. Through either a simple case of mistaken identity or an outright framing, the PC heroes are accused of a crime they did not commit. They are currently wanted by the authorities. Not only must they execute their mission, but they must do it without any assistance from standard law-enforcement officials. In fact, they may need to flee from or fight those same officials or NPC heroes who want to bring them to justice.

6. Break the law? The heroes are faced with some situation where they must break the law to accomplish their mission. Do they steal the top-secret experimental transonic aircraft to pursue their escaping archnemesis? Do they break the NPC informant out of jail so he'll reveal some vital information? Do the heroes kill the villain who wiped out their families?

7. Give up item? Do the heroes sacrifice some material object to achieve a goal? Only a PC hero's magical sword can wound the mystical alien, but the alien's acidic blood will destroy the sword. Only the hero's power ring has enough juice to ignite the starship's hyperdrive engines and take the heroes back to their own galaxy, but the strain will cause the ring to burn out.

8. "Goodbye." When a particular hero's views differ from the rest of the group, does the hero leave the group and the campaign? This situation often arises over the idea of killing foes. Alternatively, a hero could leave the group to go off on some secret solo mission. The player then introduces a new character to the campaign and the group—maybe a character the other PCs know nothing about.

9. Reveal identity? This complication requires a bit of work to set up properly. Present a dilemma in which the player must decide whether to reveal the hero's secret identity. Perhaps the hero's secret identity is charged with a crime (see "Wanted" above). The hero was out battling some foe at the time he was to have committed the crime, but he cannot use his alibi and clear his name.

10. Team up. For some reason, the campaign's heroes and villains need to work together. The heroes and villains are battling in a spacecraft, and they must use their brains and powers in concert to safely pilot the craft through the asteroid field they've accidentally entered. I was planning, but never got around to running, a scenario in my old super-hero campaign where the city's heroes (the PCs) and its resident villains would need to fight side-by-side to repel an alien invasion.

Motives

As a GM, I've always enjoyed creating characters, especially villains. I considered it a kind of research; when a villain really came together well, I'd want to use him in an adventure. What I had to figure out then was *why* the character had become a villain in the first place. What was his motivation? The chart below gives 10 generic motives for a villain's activities. Roll 1d10 for a random motive, or choose one and individualize it for the next villain you create.

1. Corruption. Villains with this motive are truly evil. They seek to debase and corrupt all that is good and true and right in the world. These villains are sinister, even horrifying, and are often supernatural (demons, etc.) in origin.

2. Avoiding capture. This motive isn't one for the long-term campaign, but does work well for a scenario. The villains with this motive have encountered the heroes before, lost to them, were captured and sent to prison. When the heroes meet these villains again, the villains will do *anything* to avoid being captured and imprisoned once again.

3. Insanity. Villains like these are just plain nuts. Their mental illnesses cause them untold grief and suffering, and they decide since they're miserable, everyone else should be too. These villains are often nihilistic, seeking to destroy not just the heroes, but everyone and everything. Also, many of these villains have very little sense of self-preservation, so they might take outrageous risks to achieve their insane goals. Perhaps their ultimate goal actually is to commit suicide, taking as much of the world as they can with them.

4. Idealogy. Villains don't see the world the way we do. They could have political views that conflict with ours (Nazis, communists, etc.), or they could believe all human life is inimical to them. (Many aliens have this view.) In either case, these villains seek to remove that which offends them—namely the heroes and all they represent and protect.

5. Mischief. These villains are bored, and turn to crime to brighten their days and to have fun. Many villains with this motive are less than sane, but not often in a truly malevolent way. These villains often come across as complete goofballs, and scenarios they appear in can be played for humor.

6. Power. This motive is pretty straightforward. These villains want to take over. These monomaniacs want to remake the world in their images, but their plans are so often interrupted by those pesky heroes. That obstacle (the heroes) must be removed so the villains' plan of conquest can continue unhindered.

7. Pride. Similar to "Power" above, villains with this motive consider themselves better than the rest of the world. Problems for these villains arise when the heroes show themselves to be equally competent, if not superior, to the villains. The villains know they are the best, smartest, strongest, etc., but the world doesn't appreciate them and won't as long as those overblown heroes are around.

8. Wealth. These villains are just greedy. They want all the world has to offer, and they'll use their powers to take all they can. They don't want to destroy anything, they just want to possess as much as their brains and powers can get them.

9. Survival. These villains aren't necessarily evil, they are doing what they must to survive. These things they do to survive are what brings them to the attention of the heroes and what causes them to be labeled villains. Perhaps they need a rare drug to live, and the only company that manufactures the drug charges so much the villains cannot afford to purchase it. So, the villains either steal to pay for the drug, or steal the drug directly. This motive works well with the "Coercion" adventure hook above.

10. Vengeance. This is a common motive. These villains are convinced they've been wronged by the world, society, the heroes, etc., and the villains intend to take revenge on those who offended them, to teach the heroes the error of their ways. These are the villains who hold grudges against everyone who over slighted them. They never forget an insult.

Quotes

I've always had a problem coming up with appropriately menacing dialogue for my super villains in the middle of running a fight scene. So, the table below provides examples of what most megalomaniacs consider to be snappy patter. Roll 1d10 to use these quotes, pick one, or come up with variants. The concept for this table was very liberally borrowed from Steven E. Schend's "Maniacal Quotes" table in the BUCK ROGERS® HIGH ADVENTURE™ game's *War Against the Han* boxed set. I've adapted and expanded it to fit the modern super-hero genre.

1. "You FOOLS! I'll destroy you all for what you've done!"

2. "Now, with a single master stroke, I'll eliminate all obstacles from my path and take my rightful place as the MASTER OF THE _____ (world, galaxy, etc.)!"

3. "You thought you were so clever, so smug in your safe little world. Well, who's the clever one now? TELL ME, WHO!?!"

4. "It is time for you to learn who is the true master here, my little heroes."

5. "You cannot defeat me. I shall conquer all my enemies. I have foreseen it. It is my DESTINY!"

6. "Admit defeat? To such as you? NEVER! I'll die before I'd let myself be defeated by the likes of you."

7. "Your feeble minds cannot conceive the awesome grandeur of my designs. I do not expect such dolts to comprehend my ingenious plans."

8. "You expect me to fall for such a simple-minded tactic? I think you sorely underestimate me. You will come to regret that mistake."

9. "You shall rue the day you dared to interfere with me. Now, I shall have my REVENGE!

10. "I can be merciful. If you surrender to me now, you have my word that I will kill you quickly."

Have fun with these tables. Expand them with your own ideas. Don't feel limited by the format. If you've read something you particularly like, just take the idea and run with it.

Inspiration for this column is owed to the following people or their work: Jean Rabe, Allen Varney, and Steven E. Schend. If you have any comments or questions regarding this column and what you want to see in it in the future, write to **With Great Power,** c/o POLYHEDRON® Newszine, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147. I can't promise to respond to everyone, but I'm looking forward to hearing from you. ❑

Necromagic

Magical Items For Necromancers In The AD&D® Game

by Gary S. Watkins

Few explore and understand the mysteries of life, death, and unlife as does the necromancer. Wringing secrets from hateful spirits, binding unwilling souls to unyielding flesh, and twisting mystical energies into mockeries of life, such lords of the unliving advance their knowledge with little regard for the cost, measured in others' lives and souls. In spite of the great power they wield, little is known of their magics. Below are a few of the products of the necromancer's dark art, obtained at great peril and sacrifice. Learn of them here, that in your adventures you may see them for what they are and avoid the gruesome fate that has befallen so many who have met with necromagic.

Gloom Candle

Specially enchanted ebon tapers of this sort are a boon to evil priests and necromancers alike. A gloom candle burns for an hour, although it can be extinguished prior to that duration through any normal means. While it burns, a gloom candle fills a 100-foot radius with deep shadow, negating any light or darkness spells within its area of effect. A necromancer using the candle gains the ability to control undead as a 6th level priest within the radius and for the duration of the candle's power. Evil priests gain a +2 bonus to control undead. Non-evil priests suffer a −4 penalty to their turning/controlling attempts. Finally, undead within the candle's area of effect regenerate 1 hit point per round while the candle burns, although they do not regenerate if reduced to 0 hit points. From 1-4 (1d4) candles usually will be found.
XP Value: 100
GP Value: 300

Juju Wine

This brackish, bubbling potion transforms a normal zombie into a juju zombie under the control of its creator. An individual who drinks this potion loses all of his or her racial, class, and professional abilities, becoming in essence a "living" zombie for the duration of the potion's effect, 2-5 (1d4 + 1) days. A living zombie automatically obeys the commands of the first person to speak to him or her and cannot otherwise be turned or affected by mind control magic from any other source.
XP Value: 150
GP Value: 500

Ghast Salve

Only a few powerful necromancers know the secret of creating this sickly green ointment. The cream's powers activate one round after being spread upon the recipient's body. The recipient gains immunity to paralysis and to the stench of ghasts. The user of *ghast salve* exudes the same stench as a ghast and can paralyze others by touch if the victim fails to save vs paralysis. One drawback of ghast salve is that it reacts strongly to holy water. If struck by holy water, the user of *ghast salve* suffers damage as though truly undead (1d6 + 1 damage for a direct hit, 2 points of damage for a splash). Typically, 1d3 jars each containing three applications of the salve will be found.
XP Value: 500/jar
GP Value: 1,200/jar

Nether Scarab

A nether scarab is a dark, twisted version of the more beneficial scarab of protection. It has the same ability to absorb the life energy draining attacks of certain undead but does not confer a saving throw bonus or allow a saving throw against spells that do not normally permit one. A nether scarab's most feared power is the ability to store the level draining attacks it absorbs, which the scarab's owner may then use later as an attack. The scarab's possessor need only touch a victim, and if the victim fails a save vs death magic, a level is drained. Only one level may be drained per round. An item of this nature usually has 10 charges, but a rare few (5%) have 20 charges. A nether scarab never can be recharged.
XP Value: 5,000
GP Value: 25,000

Shadowblade

Appearing as a dagger hilt with a wavy, blade-like shadow extending six inches beyond, a shadowblade serves as a receptacle or prison for an undead shadow (see MC 1 or the Monstrous Manual). As such, the dagger derives certain powers from its unholy occupant. It functions as a *dagger +1* and drains 1d4 points of Strength from a victim with each successful hit, just as a shadow.

A shadowblade is invisible to all but its wielder (in the shadows or darkness), and it strikes silently. The weapon radiates evil and magic if such is detected for. Anyone drained of all Strength by a shadowblade becomes a shadow under the control of the blade's wielder. A shadowblade cannot be "turned" or controlled by priest, although shadows created by a shadowblade have no such immunity (treat the shadowblade's owner as a 9th level cleric for determination of his or her chance to control the blade's minion shadows). Only evil characters can use a shadowblade. Good characters wielding the dagger find it acts as a normal dagger.
XP Value: 2,000
GP Value: 9,000

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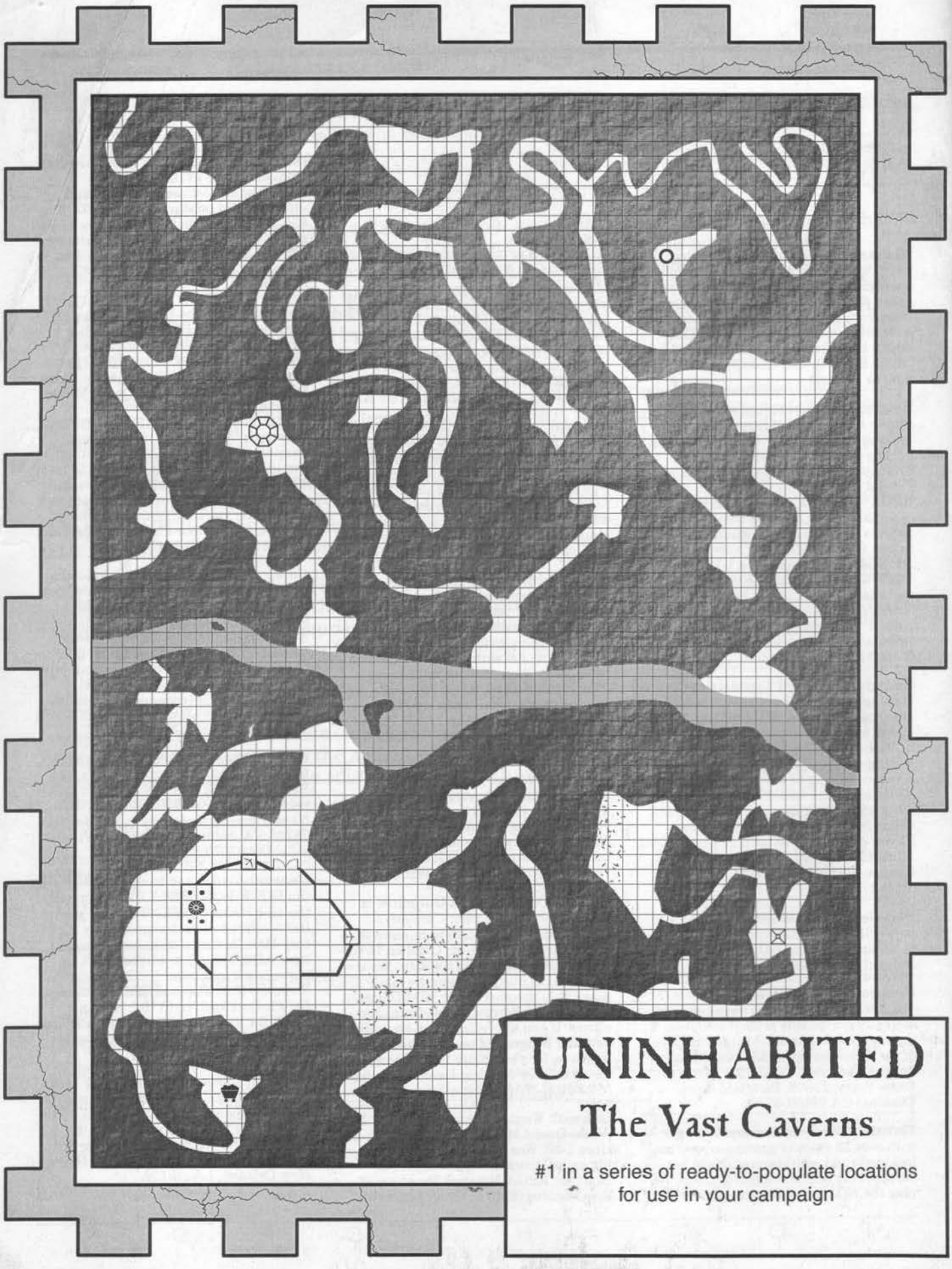

UNINHABITED

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